Court triumph
for the Goop
guru

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The TV star
who found fame
as Lily Savage

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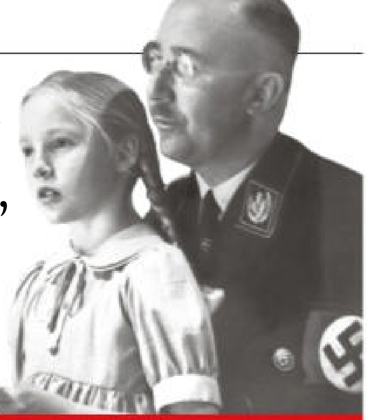
The children
of Hitler's
"master race"

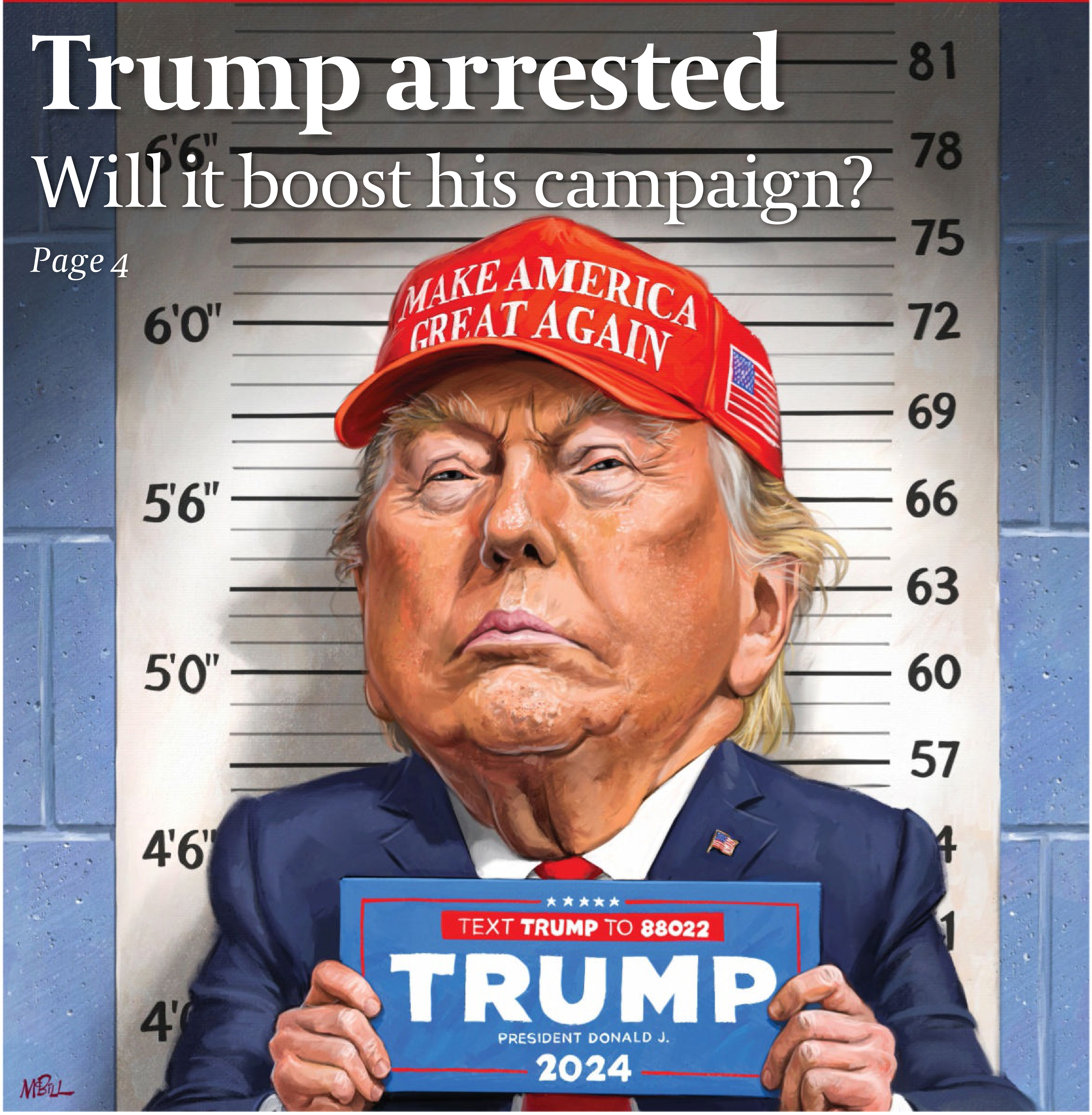
LAST WORD *P44*



THE WEEK

8 APRIL 2023 | ISSUE 1430

THE BEST OF THE BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA



Trump arrested

Will it boost his campaign?

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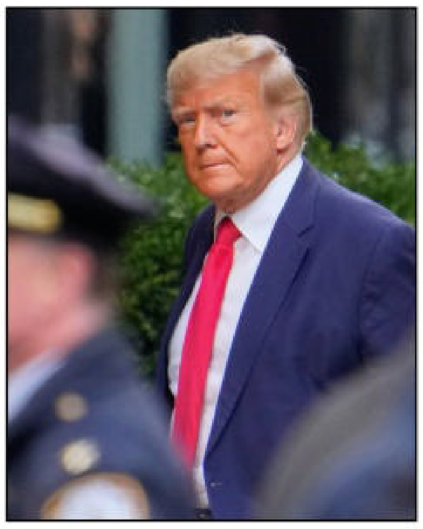
What happened

Trump indicted

Donald Trump surrendered to prosecutors on Tuesday after becoming the first former US president in history to be charged with a criminal offence. He was fingerprinted, read his rights and bailed. A grand jury in New York had voted last week to indict the 76-year-old, having decided that there was sufficient evidence to launch criminal proceedings. Trump reportedly faces multiple counts related to business fraud. The case centres on hush money Trump paid to the porn actress Stormy Daniels through his then lawyer Michael Cohen shortly before the 2016 presidential election. Cohen gave Daniels $130,000 to stop her selling her account of an alleged sexual encounter with Trump in 2006, which the former president has always denied. Trump later reimbursed Cohen, payments that were designated as legal fees.



Trump: victim of a witch hunt?

Trump condemned the criminal charges as a politically motivated "witch hunt". In angry posts on his Truth Social platform, he referred to Alvin Bragg, the Manhattan district attorney heading the inquiry, as an "animal", and claimed the judge assigned to his case was prejudiced against him.

What the editorials said

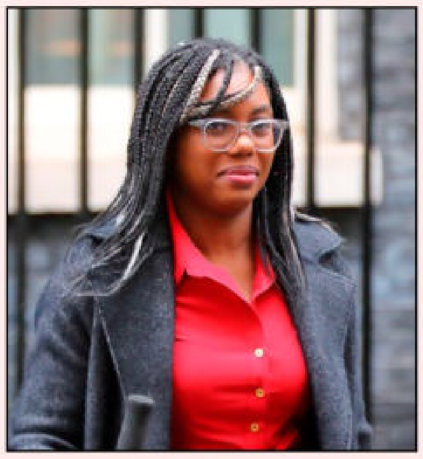
Donald Trump has achieved a number of firsts in his time, said the Evening Standard. He was the first candidate to win the White House without any prior military or government service; the first president to be impeached twice; and now he's the first former US leader to face criminal charges. The indictment will bring further rancour to the US, said The Guardian. Trump, who'd warned of "potential death and destruction" if he were indicted, is doing his best to stoke tensions. But to shy away from holding the former president to account for fear of the consequences really would undermine US democracy.

The rule of law must be honoured, said the FT. By treating Trump like any other suspect, Alvin Bragg has got the ball rolling and made it easier for prosecutors to press ahead with other, more serious, inquiries involving him. On the contrary, by reviving a tenuous seven-year-old case that federal prosecutors had declined to act on, the Democrat Bragg has foolishly opened a "Pandora's box", said The Wall Street Journal. The indictment looks like a "political prosecution", and makes it more likely that Trump will win the Republican presidential nomination – which is exactly what the Democrats, who think he's the easiest candidate to beat, want.

What happened

The UK's new trade deal

The Government struck a deal to join an 11-member Asia-Pacific trade bloc last week, a step hailed by No. 10 as an example of Britain seizing its "post-Brexit freedoms". The deal, secured following two years of talks, will make the UK the first nation to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) since its launch in 2018. Downing Street said that under its terms, 99% of UK goods exported to the bloc's member states – Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, Peru and Vietnam – would be eligible for zero tariffs.



Badenoch: a "gateway" deal

Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch described the deal as the most significant commercial agreement signed by the UK since Brexit, and a "gateway to the wider Indo-Pacific region". Labour welcomed the agreement, but noted that the Government's own analysis suggested that it will only increase UK GDP by 0.08% in a decade.

What the editorials said

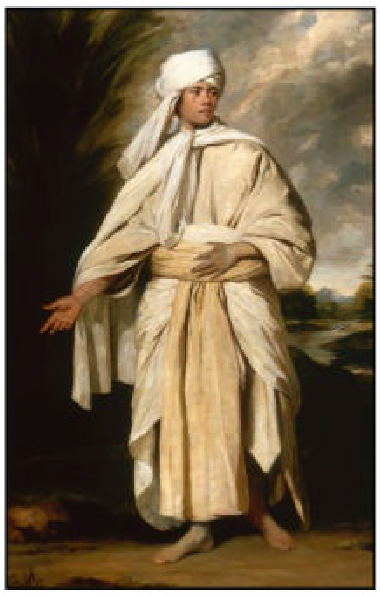
This deal is "exactly what Brexit was meant to be about", said the Daily Mail – a major shift away from the low-growth eurozone towards some of the world's most dynamic economies. Between them, the CPTPP nations currently generate 13% of global GDP and have a population of half a billion. By 2030, the Indo-Pacific region will be home to half the world's middle-class consumers – "2.3 billion potential customers". British businesses will now have privileged access to this rapidly-growing market, said The Daily Telegraph, so we should take forecasts that the deal will have only a negligible impact on long-term economic growth with a generous "pinch of salt".

Maybe so, but the immediate economic benefits of the deal are likely to be limited, said The Times. Exports to CPTPP nations were worth about £60bn in 2021-22 (compared with exports of £161bn to the US and £330bn to the EU), and Britain already has free trade agreements with all but two of the group's members. That said, the deal gives Britain more influence in a crucial region, and should cut costs and red tape for businesses.

It wasn't all bad

More than 50 years after being captured in Puget Sound, off Washington State, the oldest killer whale in captivity is to be returned to her native waters. Lolita, 56, spent decades as the star attraction at the Miami Seaquarium, where she was held in the smallest orca enclosure in the US. But following years of lobbying by animal welfare activists, the aquarium has promised to send the orca back to Puget Sound – where her mother, 95, still swims – within two years.

The future of Sir Joshua Reynolds' *The Portrait of Omai* has been secured thanks to a unique deal between London's National Portrait Gallery and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Depicting a Polynesian who sailed to Britain with Captain Cook, the c.1776 work is one of the earliest great portraits of a person of colour, but was under threat of disappearing into a private collection after an export bar expired. Under the deal, each museum will pay half of the portrait's £50m price tag and it will be shown alternately in LA and London. It could be on display in London as soon as June, when the Portrait Gallery reopens after a three-year makeover.



The funeral of one of the RAF's last black Second World War veterans has had to be rearranged, because so many people want to attend. Flt. Sgt. Peter Brown, who served at RAF Scampton, died in west London aged 96. His funeral was due to be held in a 140-seat chapel last week, but when his friends started an appeal to find any surviving relatives, it generated such a huge response from the public, the service had to be moved. Westminster Council is now working with the RAF and the MoD to ensure that he has the "send-off he deserves".

COVER CARTOON: HOWARD MCWILLIAM

…and how they were covered

What the commentators said

In 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant was arrested in Washington for speeding in his horse-drawn coach. Far from demeaning the presidency, this incident reflected well on US democracy, said Nicholas Kristof in The New York Times. It's true that America has never prosecuted a former leader, and that President Gerald Ford's pre-emptive pardoning of the former president Richard Nixon helped the US move on from the Watergate scandal. But Nixon was a discredited, broken figure at that time, not, like Trump, a dangerously unrepentant leader running for re-election. Stormy Daniels, for one, is pleased that Trump is "no longer untouchable", said Jane Mulkerrins in The Times. Although she has been bombarded with death threats from supporters of the former president, she has no fear of facing him in court. "I've seen him naked," she says. "There's no way he could be scarier with his clothes on."

Not so long ago, Trump's presidential campaign appeared to be "floundering", said Andrew Neil in the Daily Mail. Now he's back in the spotlight, milking his new prominence for all it's worth. He managed to raise $1.5m in three days merely on the possibility that he was about to be charged. Whatever happens to him in court, the indictment has helped him in the short term. It has forced Republican rivals such as Ron DeSantis to rally to his defence *(see page 15)* and distracted attention from the far stronger case against him in Georgia, where there is "compelling evidence" that he tried to get Republican officials to alter the 2020 election result.

Trump's indictment has exposed political hypocrisy on both sides, said Ramesh Ponnuru in The Washington Post. Republicans who chanted "Lock her up!" about Hillary Clinton in 2016 are complaining about liberals "weaponising the law against political opponents". Meanwhile, Democrats who "saw authoritarianism in that chant" crowed at the prospect of Trump having his mugshot taken. It's hard to tell at this point whether the indictment will ultimately help or hinder Trump's re-election chances, but if it encourages more "dubious prosecutions" of opposing politicians, its long-term effects on US politics will be very damaging.

What next?

Trump's lawyers are sure to fight the charges tooth-and-nail in the pre-trial stages, submitting motions to exclude evidence and testimony, says The Guardian. It could be months before another formal hearing, and years before any trial.

Along with the Georgia case, Trump is facing two federal criminal investigations, reports the LA Times. One is examining his involvement in the 6 January 2021 attack on the US Capitol; the other is into his handling of government documents, many of them classified, that he kept at his Florida estate. The Georgia case appears to be close to a final decision, while the federal inquiries look unlikely to be completed for months.

What the commentators said

"Rishi Sunak is on a roll," said Ambrose Evans-Pritchard in The Daily Telegraph. Fresh from putting UK-EU trade relations on a workable foundation by signing off on the Windsor Framework, the PM has now secured a deal that could be even more transformative. Once it includes the UK, the CPTPP will account for more than 15% of global GDP – a bigger share than the EU. And if more states from Latin America and east Asia join (and many want to), it could become "the world's largest trading system". In short, Britain is now part of a group of economies that are set to dominate the coming decades. But this deal is about more than tariffs and imports, said Cristina Gallardo in Politico. "It's about post-Brexit Britain's place in a 21st century dominated by the rise of China." It puts meat on the bones of the UK's Indo-Pacific foreign policy tilt; and, crucially, it gives the UK a veto over other countries' applications to join the group – meaning it could step in to thwart China's efforts to do so.

But at what cost, asked Nick Dearden in The Guardian. Britain made big concessions to secure this deal. It was forced to "lower environmental standards", including by cutting tariffs on exports of palm oil, plantations of which drive deforestation in Malaysia. And the bloc's focus on accepting imports, even when standards diverge, means that Britain will now face pressure to accept "hormone-treated beef" and food treated with pesticides that are banned here, thereby undermining British farmers. Now we've "taken back control", you'd hope MPs would be able to scrutinise such deals. But the parliamentary committee that examined treaties like the CPTPP was quietly abolished last month. Frankly, it's absurd to sell the deal as a Brexit bonus, said Paul Waugh in The i Paper. The 0.08% boost to GDP it's forecast to give us pales in comparison to the 4% hit to GDP we're taking as a result of Brexit; and with Britain facing stagnant wages and years of limp growth, it comes across as "tone-deaf" too. Time for "a dollop of honesty".

What next?

The agreement reached by the Government paves the way for formal accession to the CPTPP next year, The Times reports. Ministers hope the group will then continue to grow: Costa Rica, Uruguay and Ecuador are among the nations interested in joining. There are also hopes that the US could join. It was due to be a founder member, but pulled out during the Trump administration.

The dairy, car and spirits sectors were tipped as potential winners from the deal. Ministers also hope that the agreement could act as a spur for finalising a UK-India trade deal.

THE WEEK

It will have as profound an impact on the world as electricity or fire. That's what Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Google, once said of artificial intelligence (AI). The question is, will it be a force for good or ill? Many leading figures in the industry have warned that AI could pose a threat to mankind *(see page 20)*, but another tech pioneer, Martha Lane Fox, cautioned this week against becoming "too hysterical" over AI, saying that while being mindful of the risks, we should embrace its opportunities.

There's no doubt that this technology could bring all sorts of benefits. In an interesting column in the FT last week, Camilla Cavendish wrote about the impact clever new software has already had on parts of the NHS. She wasn't referring to generative AI like the ChatGPT chatbot, but rather to database software that consolidates lots of information from different parts of the system – staff rotas, operating theatre timetables, pre-surgery tests, surgeons' holiday dates – to help practitioners make faster, more informed decisions. One of the firms behind this software, Palantir, has also provided invaluable software to Ukraine's army. It has allowed their commanders in the field to view satellite imagery alongside a mass of other real-time location and weapons data, enabling them, as one commentator recently put it, to see "through the fog of war". If we can safely harness the power of smart algorithms, it might likewise help our leaders see through the fog of administration and deliver properly joined-up government.

Harry Nicolle

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We're keen to hear your thoughts and feedback in our latest survey. At The Week, we want to better understand your needs, values and preferences to help us develop digital products that you will enjoy and use.

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Controversy of the week

Is "net zero" doomed?

"Crossing fingers and hoping for the best is hardly a sensible way to tackle the climate emergency," said Bill McGuire in The Guardian. Yet that's the strategy the Government appears to be adopting in its climate change plan Powering Up Britain – published last week in response to a High Court ruling that its existing strategy for meeting its own target for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 wasn't detailed enough. "More a damp squib than a rocket", it amounts to 2,800 pages of rehashed announcements. There is no new funding for green initiatives like heat pumps or onshore wind, and no serious plan for insulating our leaky homes. Instead, it promises a "fossil fuel bonanza", said George Monbiot in the same paper – including tax breaks for oil and gas exploration, and licensing for new North Sea oilfields. To make up for this, the Government is betting the house on the fiction that we can "bury" the resulting emissions through carbon capture and storage – a technology that "has not materialised at scale for 20 years, and never will."

Sunak: quietly dropping the 2050 target?

The Government's real failure, said Jeremy Warner in The Daily Telegraph, is that it has completely underestimated "the scale of the challenge it has set itself". The promise of net zero is that "dirty fuels" will be removed from the economy by 2050. Yet right now, up to 76% of the UK's total energy consumption comes from petrol, diesel, coal and heating oil – far more "than the European average of 57%". To turn things around in 27 years would require a vast increase in electricity production, with "hugely more nuclear power and an almost complete recabling of the country". You'll find no such plans in the new strategy. Nor is there anything like Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, said John Rentoul in The Independent, which will pump a staggering $369bn-worth of green subsidies into the US economy. Perhaps that's because voters are ambivalent about borrowing vast sums to fix climate change, and unconvinced that "greenery is a cost-free, job-creating option".

"The public simply isn't taking the bait," said Ross Clark on CapX. The assumption was that people would need little inducement to switch to electric cars and ovens, because in the long run they're cheaper. But it's not happening. The Government needs 600,000 homeowners a year to replace their gas or oil boilers with heat pumps; "in 2021, just 55,000 took the plunge". The same goes for electric cars: sales have stalled since the expiration of generous subsidies, and mass take-up isn't feasible without huge investment in the charging network. That leaves the Government with an "unpalatable choice": drop its 2050 target, or force voters into swallowing costly, election-losing measures. On the basis of his energy plan, said The Wall Street Journal, it looks as if Rishi Sunak has chosen the former, "in deed if not in word". Under his premiership, "net zero is dying a slow death".

Boats to house migrants
The Government has confirmed that it plans to accommodate thousands of male asylum seekers on boats as well as at disused military bases. The Home Office has said the proposed accommodation, designed to be used as an alternative to hotels, will meet "essential living needs and nothing more". The sites being mooted include HMP Northeye in East Sussex, and RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire, the former base of the Dambusters squadron. The vessels being eyed up as migrant hostels are said to be giant barges normally used for workers on offshore construction projects. Local Tory MPs and councils are among those opposing the plans, citing their likely impact on local services.

More teachers' strikes
Teachers in England have rejected a government pay offer, and announced two more days of strikes, on 27 April and 2 May. The NEU said that 98% of its members had voted to reject the offer – of a £1,000 one-off payment this year, and a 4.3% rise next year – on a turnout of 66%. Tens of thousands of junior doctors are due to begin a four-day strike next week in demand of "pay restoration". The BMA says their pay has fallen by 26.1% in real terms since 2008.

Spirit of the age

The legendary Volkswagen Golf is to disappear from production lines owing to markets shifting to electric vehicles. VW's CEO confirmed this week that an update to the Golf next year will be the last with a combustion engine, and said that VW would only pass on the Golf name if it developed an e-car that would "fit the genes" of the original. Launched in 1974, the Golf has since sold well over 35 million models.

Councillors in Oxford have proposed selling various "inappropriate" artworks, and replacing them with works that "rebalance the lack of diversity" in the council's collection. Among those that could go is a painting of Salome bearing the head of St John the Baptist, and a sculpture depicting a fox hunt.

Good week for:

England's meadowlands, with the unveiling of a plan to create or restore meadows at 100 historic sites across England, to mark the coronation. Announcing the project, English Heritage's head of gardens noted that 97% of meadows that were recorded in the UK in the 1930s had disappeared by the mid-1980s.

Russian tennis players, after last year's ban on them competing at Wimbledon was reversed. However, players from Russia and Belarus will have to sign neutrality agreements in order to take part. These will confirm that they are not being state funded; that they are not representing their countries; and that they will not express support for the war in Ukraine or their governments.

Bad week for:

Road safety, with warnings that plans to test a mobile phone siren could cause a spate of accidents. On 23 April, almost all mobile phones will emit a loud, ten-second blast. There will be a publicity campaign in advance of the test, but there are concerns that it could still catch people unawares. The siren will be used to alert the public to emergencies such as floods and terrorist attacks.

Animal Rebellion, whose plot to disrupt the Grand National was infiltrated by a reporter and exposed. The activists had apparently been planning to invade Aintree racecourse and glue themselves together to stop the race on 15 April.

Rented e-scooters, which are to be outlawed in Paris. The city was one of the first to introduce them, in 2018, but in a referendum last week, 89% of votes cast were in support of a ban. However, with no online voting, turnout was only about 8%.

Poll watch

Only **21%** of voters think Rishi Sunak's strategy for tackling illegal cross-Channel migration is likely to be effective in stopping the boats, down from **26%** just after he announced his new legislative measures in early March. **63%** think his plan is unlikely to be effective (up from **59%**), including **60%** of people who voted Tory at the last election.
YouGov/The Times

51% of British adults say they are dissatisfied with the NHS, up from **25%** in 2020. **29%** are satisfied, down from **70%** in 2010.
NatCen/The Guardian

31% of voters think Keir Starmer has set out a clear vision for Labour; **22%** say he has been a great or good leader, including **37%** of Labour voters.
YouGov/HuffPost

Europe at a glance

Helsinki

Marin ousted: Finland's prime minister, Sanna Marin, was narrowly defeated in this week's parliamentary elections. Her centre-left Social Democratic Party increased its share of the vote to 19.9% – up from 17.7% in 2019 – but still trailed the conservative National Coalition Party, which took 20.8%, and the eurosceptic Finns Party (20.1%). Petteri Orpo, the leader of the National Coalition Party, now faces tough coalition negotiations. Marin had successfully steered her country to Nato membership (Finland officially joined the alliance two days after the poll), but the campaign was largely dominated by domestic issues including education, immigration and Finland's mounting debt – the budget deficit has risen to €8.1bn this year. Orpo has promised cuts to its generous welfare state. Finland applied to join Nato last May with neighbouring Sweden, but Sweden's bid has been stalled by opposition from Turkey.

Moscow

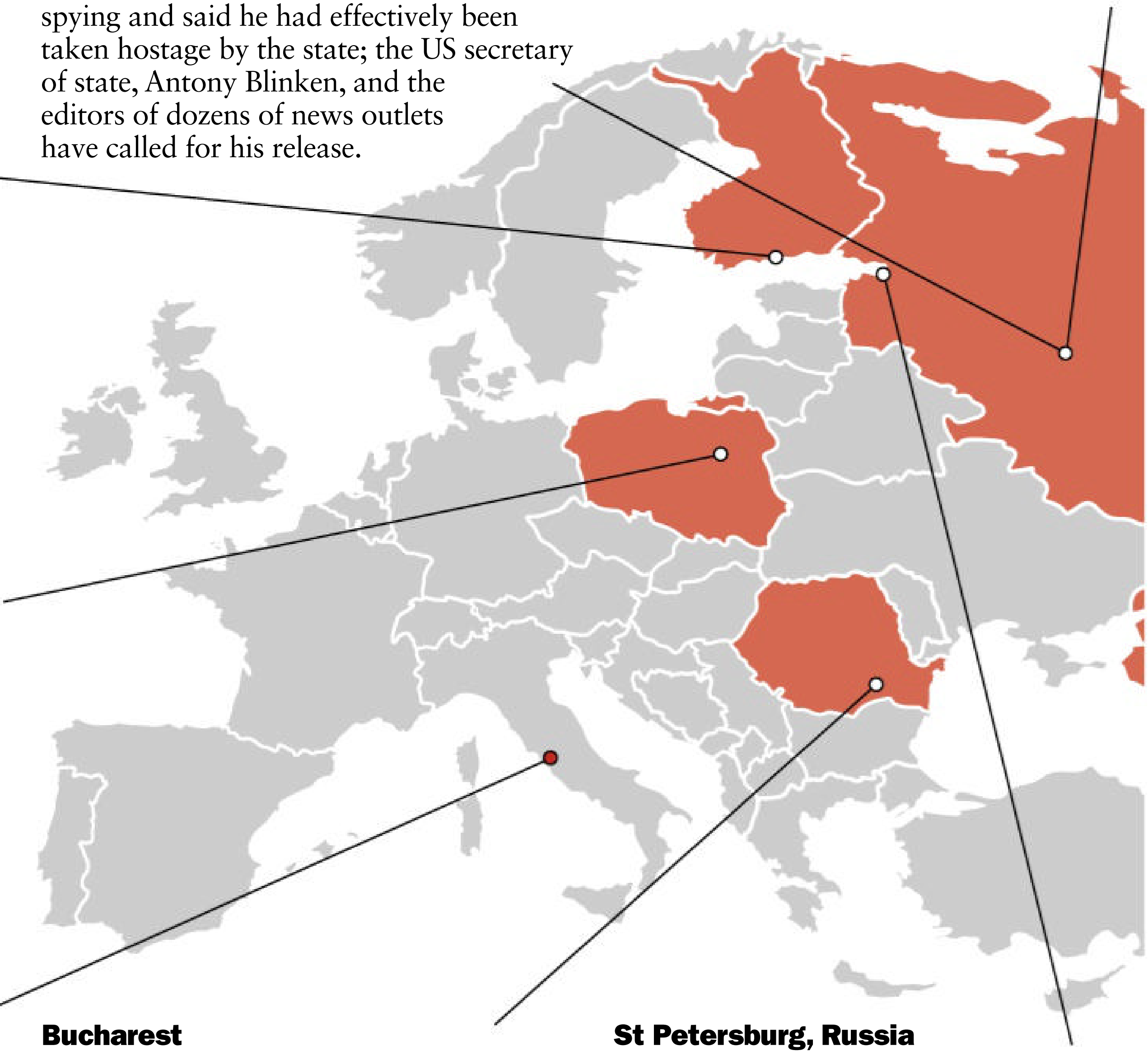
Journalist arrested: The arrest of a US journalist in Russia has sparked international outrage. The son of Soviet émigrés, Evan Gershkovich, 31, was on assignment for The Wall Street Journal when he was arrested in the city of Yekaterinburg, in the Urals. A day later, he appeared in court in Moscow, accused of conducting "espionage in the interests of the American government"; the charges carry a maximum 20-year jail term. His employers vehemently deny that he was spying and said he had effectively been taken hostage by the state; the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and the editors of dozens of news outlets have called for his release.

Moscow

"Worst April Fool": Russia assumed the presidency of the UN Security Council on 1 April, in what Ukraine's foreign minister denounced as "the worst joke ever for April Fools' Day". Each of the Security Council's 15 members takes the presidency for one month at a time on a rotating basis. Russia's last month with the presidency – a status that is mainly ceremonial – was February 2022, when President Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine. Kyiv had urged other members to block it this time, but the US said there was no means for that. President Zelensky described Russia's presidency of the UN body as "absurd and destructive", adding that it proved the "bankruptcy" of such institutions. Switzerland takes over in May.

Warsaw

Claims against former Pope: Thousands of Poles marched through Warsaw and other cities on Sunday to defend the memory of Pope John Paul II in the face of suggestions that he covered up cases of child abuse in the Catholic Church. According to two investigations, one by the journalist Ekke Overbeek, and another aired by the broadcaster TVN, the late pope protected priests accused of abusing children when he was archbishop of his home town of Kraków. John Paul is widely venerated in Poland, particularly by older Poles, not least for his role in the fight against communism in the 1970s and 80s; and conservatives in the ruling Law and Justice party have been quick to come to his defence, describing calls for his legacy to be reappraised as an attack on the nation itself. Analysts say that with elections due this year, the party is trying to galvanise its core electorate and deflect from public anger about steep inflation.



Vatican City

Pope recovers: "I'm still alive," quipped Pope Francis, moments after he was discharged from Rome's Gemelli Hospital last week, having been taken admitted three days earlier. The 86-year-old was diagnosed with bronchitis, but medics said he'd responded well to treatment, and before being driven back to the Vatican he greeted well wishers and talked to reporters. He also embraced a sobbing woman whose daughter had just died in the hospital and prayed with both parents. At the Palm Sunday mass two days later, he called on Catholics to "take care of those who are left alone".

Bucharest

Tate freed: The misogynist and influencer Andrew Tate and his brother Tristan have been released from prison in Romania and placed under house arrest. The pair – who have not yet been charged with any crime – and two alleged female accomplices had just had their detention extended for a fourth time. However, an appeal judge decided that there were no grounds to keep them in jail while the investigation, into allegations of sexual exploitation and human trafficking, continued. Following his release, Tate insisted that there was "zero chance" of him being found guilty, and released a clip of himself smoking a cigar, shirtless, as he paced up and down in a room in his home. He had, he said, been in "24-hour lockdown" since his arrest in December. "Absolute clarity of mind. Real thoughts. Real plans. Vivid pain. One hour home and I can't stand my phone. Some habits die hard. We must defeat Shaytan."

St Petersburg, Russia

Military blogger killed: An explosion tore through a café in St Petersburg this week, killing the influential military blogger Vladlen Tatarsky and injuring more than 30 people. A notorious propagandist for the invasion of Ukraine, Tatarsky, 40, had also been a vehement critic of Russia's military leadership for its failure to make more headway on the war. He was taking part in a meeting in the café on Sunday afternoon when a young woman entered and handed him a box containing a statuette of himself, which is believed to have concealed a bomb. The police later revealed that a 26-year-old Russian, Darya Trepova, had been detained. Officials later released a video of Trepova, an anti-war activist, admitting that she'd delivered the box but implying that she'd been set up. In the clip, which is likely to have been recorded under duress, she says she will reveal who gave her the box later.

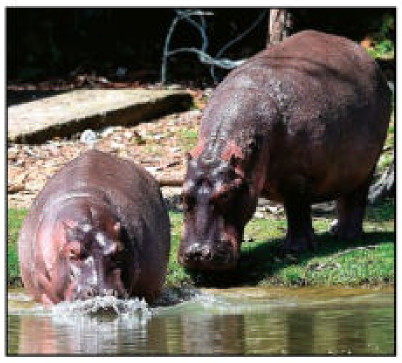
The world at a glance

Fort Campbell, Kentucky
Chopper crash: Nine American troops were killed last week, when two US military helicopters crashed during a night-time training exercise near a base in Kentucky. The collision, involving two UH-60 Black Hawks from the 101st airborne division, happened during practices of "multi-ship formations" and medical evacuation drills. All nine troops were wearing night-vision goggles; no injuries were reported on the ground, and the weather was good. Witnesses described the helicopters flying close together before a "fireball" lit up the night sky. Officials said that the crash marked "a heavy day for the army", and that an inquiry into its causes was now under way. Nicknamed the "Screaming Eagles", the 101st airborne division is described on its website as "the only air assault division of the US army", and was most recently deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Little Rock, Arkansas
More twisters: A monster storm system, including more than 50 tornadoes, ripped through states in the US South and Midwest last Friday. At least 32 people were killed as homes were reduced to matchwood and shopping centres were flattened in towns and cities in Indiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Illinois and Alabama. One of the victims died when a theatre roof collapsed during a packed heavy metal concert in Belvidere, Illinois. In Arkansas, the state governor has called a state of emergency; the White House announced this week that federal aid was being made available to the state. The storms struck a week after a rare, long-track twister killed at least 26 people in Mississippi.

Ciudad Juárez, Mexico
Murder inquiry: Prosecutors have launched a homicide inquiry into the deaths of 39 men in a fire at a migrant detention facility in northern Mexico last week. The fire is believed to have started when one or more migrants held at the centre at Ciudad Juárez, on the US border, set fire to their mattresses in a protest against their deportation. But while the women at the centre were all safely evacuated, prosecutors say that none of the officials and security contractors employed at the centre "took any action to open the door" for the male migrants. CCTV footage shows three guards seeming to hurry out of a cell block as it fills with smoke, leaving migrants in their cells. Nine people could face charges.

Guatemala City
Controversial visit: The Taiwanese president, Tsai Ing-wen, and her Guatemalan counterpart Alejandro Giammattei took part in a photo call at a Mayan pyramid last Saturday, as they reaffirmed the ties between their two countries. Guatemala is one of only 13 nations to maintain diplomatic relations with Taiwan, at a cost of relations with China. Tsai's visit came just days after Honduras had switched allegiance to Beijing, saying it recognised "only one China". From Guatemala, she moved on to Belize before flying to the US, where she was reportedly scheduled to meet Kevin McCarthy, the Republican speaker. Last month, Beijing warned that it would regard any such meeting as a "provocation", and a "serious" violation of the "One China" principle that the US agreed to abide by 50 years ago.



Bogotá
Hippos deported: The Colombian state is paying $3.5m to deport Pablo Escobar's hippos. The cocaine kingpin smuggled four hippos from Africa in the 1980s, to keep on his ranch in Antioquia state. Following his death, they escaped into the surrounding wilderness, and they now number around 150. The hippos have become a popular tourist attraction, but they are also damaging the fragile ecosystem of the Magdalena River basin. Plans to cull them have caused outrage, and sterilising the huge creatures has proved very difficult. The current plan is to round up 70 of them, and send them to sanctuaries in Mexico and India.

Akwesasne, Canada
Migrant deaths: The bodies of eight people, including two children, were retrieved last week from an area of marshland in Mohawk Nation territory in Québec, close to the US border. A spokesperson for the police said the dead appeared to be members of two families, one of Romanian descent, the other of Indian descent, who had been trying to enter the US illegally across the St Lawrence River. Both the children had Canadian passports. In January, US officials said they'd detained 367 people on the northern border, more than in the previous 12 Januarys combined.

Norte de Santander, Colombia
Troops killed: Nine Colombian soldiers were killed last week, in an attack blamed on the National Liberation Army (ELN) rebel group. The government said that militants launched homemade mortar shells at a military base in Norte de Santander province, an ELN stronghold near the border with Venezuela. Seven of the victims were serving compulsory military service. The attack risks setting back peace negotiations between the ELN and the government led by President Gustavo Petro, who has vowed to bring "total peace" to Colombia after decades of internal conflict in which more than 450,000 people have been killed. The talks have been under way since November, but no bilateral ceasefire has yet been agreed.

The world at a glance

São Tomé and Principe

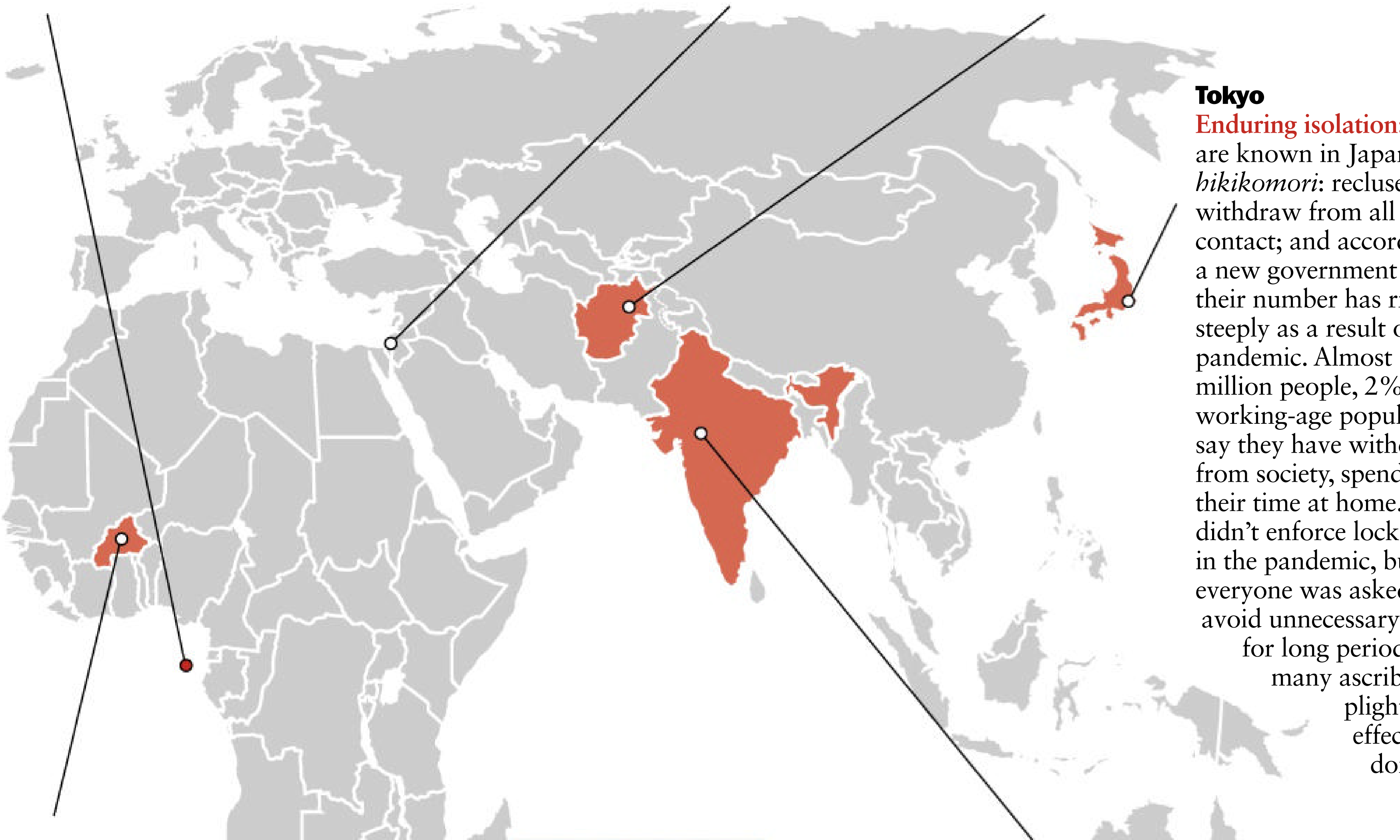
Pirate attack: A Danish-owned oil tanker that was hijacked in the Gulf of Guinea last month has been located by the French navy off the coast of the African island nation of São Tomé and Principe. Five armed men had boarded the vessel as it sat idle in the Gulf of Guinea, 140 miles off the coast of the Republic of Congo, while the 16-man crew barricaded themselves in a safe room. Last week, the ship was found abandoned. Six of the crew have been kidnapped by the pirates; the ten who were rescued are reported to be in good health. The Gulf of Guinea – the vast area of the Atlantic between Senegal and Angola – has replaced the waters around Somalia as the world's most pirate-ravaged sea in recent years. Many of the attacks are thought to be carried out by gangs in speedboats departing from the Delta region of Nigeria.

Jerusalem

National guard: Israel's PM, Benjamin Netanyahu, has agreed to form a national guard under the command of security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, leader of the far-right Jewish Power party. Ben-Gvir maintains that it is needed to toughen the state's response to internal disorder, but police commissioner Yaakov Shabtai has warned that a force outside police control could endanger the security of civilians. There are also fears of the force becoming Ben-Gvir's personal militia, and that lacking judicial oversight, it could be used to target Israel's Arab minority, Jewish dissidents and protesters. Netanyahu relies on Ben-Gvir's party for his Knesset majority and has made the move in return for Ben-Gvir's agreement not to resign over the PM's suspension of controversial plans to weaken the supreme court.

Kabul

Britons detained: The Taliban is "in negotiations" with the UK Government over the release of three British men detained by secret police in Afghanistan. Kevin Cornwell, 53, a charity medic, was arrested in January (along with an unnamed British man) after being accused of keeping an illegal firearm. The third man (pictured) is Miles Routledge, 23, a "danger tourist" who returned to the country after being evacuated during the Kabul airlift in 2021. The men have not been granted legal representation, but Cornwell has been allowed to speak to his family for the first time since his arrest.

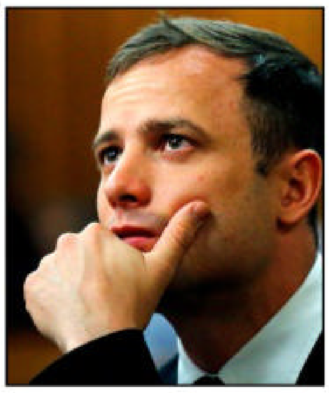


Tokyo

Enduring isolation: They are known in Japan as *hikikomori*: recluses who withdraw from all social contact; and according to a new government survey, their number has risen steeply as a result of the pandemic. Almost 1.5 million people, 2% of the working-age population, say they have withdrawn from society, spending all their time at home. Japan didn't enforce lockdowns in the pandemic, but everyone was asked to avoid unnecessary outings for long periods, and many ascribe their plight to the effect of doing so.

Ouagadougou

Reporters sent home: The military junta in Burkina Faso has expelled two French journalists working for the newspapers Libération and Le Monde – the latest move in its crackdown on foreign media and freedom of speech. The expulsions came days after a report by Libération on the alleged murder of children by the Burkinabè military, which the government condemned as a move to discredit its armed forces. For several years, French troops fighting the Islamist insurgency spreading across this part of West Africa had been a visible presence in the former French colony. But their failure to restore security gave rise to two military coups and fuelled anti-French sentiment. In January, President Ibrahim Traoré expelled all French troops from the country.



Pretoria

Parole refused: An application for parole by Oscar Pistorius – who is serving a 13-year jail sentence for the 2013 murder of his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp – has been turned down by a parole board in South Africa. In 2012, Pistorius became the first double-amputee to compete in the Olympics, and his trial transfixed the world. He was initially convicted of manslaughter – he claimed he thought an intruder was in his bathroom – but the verdict was upgraded to murder. The reason given for rejecting his appeal was that he applied too early. He can reapply in August next year, when he will have served enough time to be eligible for parole under South African law.

Indore, India

Temple tragedy: At least 36 people died, including children, when the makeshift floor covering a well in a Hindu temple collapsed beneath them last week. The temple, in the Madhya Pradesh city of Indore, had been crowded with devotees celebrating the festival of Ram Navami. Local authorities had reportedly ordered the removal of the stepwell's flimsy covering – consisting of tiles laid over a metal grille – but had backed down when locals protested. Seventeen people were rescued from the well, in which the water was roughly 25ft deep.

People

Tracey Emin's art school

When Tracey Emin was diagnosed with cancer in 2020, she was stricken by the thought that, for all her success, she'd not been happy. "I think being an artist is quite lonely," she told Jonathan Jones in The Guardian. "And I don't have any children. All of these things that other people seem to acquire in life, I don't have. And when I thought I might die, I thought 'Fuck, what have I been doing with my life?' And then I thought: 'Well, if I get through this, I'm going to do something. I'm going to change things.'" Now, "halfway" to getting the all-clear, Emin (pictured) is doing just that: having long had her studio in Margate, she has just opened an art school in the town, which includes affordable workspaces for other artists. Her vision was to create an artists' community that she could be part of. "It's a beautiful way to live and I want to have a beautiful life. And this is so lovely: come here, talk to artists, look at art. Go home, see my cats, paint my pictures." She's tried mixing with the one per cent; but this is better. "Most people don't have a choice, they haven't had it all, they don't know what it's like to prance around in the south of France with a Rolex on. Well I've done it all, I could do it a million times over, but that isn't what makes me happy. It isn't and it never will be."

Exposing the Met

Not for nothing is Baroness Casey known as the "tsar of tsars", says Fiona Hamilton in The Times. Over the years, she has advised Tony Blair on homelessness, led an inquiry into child exploitation in Rotherham, and compiled a report on social integration for Theresa May. But the year she spent with the Metropolitan Police, examining its culture and standards in the wake of the murder of Sarah Everard, proved her hardest job so far. Everard had been killed by a serving officer who'd used his police warrant card to lure her into his car. It should have been the Met's "plane falling out of the sky moment", she says; yet senior officers persisted in regarding Everard as the victim of a "bad apple". In meetings, they'd refer to her as "Sarah", and start welling up when her fate was discussed. Casey found this infuriating. "Don't get upset about it – do something about it. You didn't know her, you don't know her family. Can you at least call her Sarah Everard?" The longer she spent there, the more she realised that despite a litany of failings, senior officers expected her to give the force a clean bill of health. They'd boast that they'd made "great strides". One told her: "I think you might find pockets of misogyny... but we've pretty much dealt with racism." The "level of delusion" was so extreme she began to think there must be something in the water. "If it wasn't horrific it would be an Armando Iannucci comedy," she says. "But it's just not funny."

Tom Cruise the vampire

When Neil Jordan was gearing up to make his 1994 film *Interview with a Vampire*, he wanted Tom Cruise to star as the 6ft-tall, blond-haired vampire Lestat. Hardly anyone agreed: the book's author, Anne Rice, found the idea "perplexing", as did Brad Pitt, who'd been cast as Lestat's quasi-lover, Louis, and the book's fans were appalled. But Jordan persisted, because he could see a logic in it. Cruise is "a great actor, but his life is also not unlike the life of a vampire", he told Adam White in The Independent. "Famous people don't want to go out into an unmediated space. They have to control who they meet and how they meet them. They have to control their image. It's almost like they live in a spectral kind of world."

In 2018, the reality TV star Georgia Harrison and a man called Stephen Bear appeared together on a show called *The Challenge*, and began to date soon after, says Hilary Rose in The Times. Two years later, they came home late one night and had sex in his garden; it transpired that this had been caught on his CCTV cameras. He assured her that he hadn't meant that to happen, and promised that the footage would never see the light of day. She believed him, and even after they split up, they remained friends. Then Harrison heard that he'd been showing the clip around; then he posted it on the subscription porn site OnlyFans; and from there, it migrated to Pornhub. For a week, "Georgia Harrison sex tape" was one of the most-searched phrases on Google; the brands that she worked with dropped her. Harrison felt she had no choice but to go to the police, and last month, Bear was jailed for 21 months. The jury's verdict was a vindication of sorts, but she continues to suffer the consequences of his actions. She wants to settle down and have children, but men tell her: "You've been all over the internet and that's not attractive." And she is relentlessly trolled. Still, she is trying to make the best of it by advocating for other victims of revenge porn, and she keeps her chin up. "You only get one life," she says, "you can't waste it crying about other people's opinions. I know I'm a good person."

Viewpoint:
Embracing the mundane

The abhorrence of the boring is at the root of a lot of bad stuff. From before the South Sea bubble, the catnip of big returns has driven us into many a financial crisis. If only we stuck to boring investments in boring companies promising modest but steady returns. But no – too boring. The older I get, the more I think the secret of happiness is the ability to embrace the boring, lay claim to the mundane and rejoice in repetition. In affairs of the heart and the wallet, in family life and the workplace, we'd enjoy more lasting success if we stopped being bored by the boring, stopped seeking what we tell ourselves is the next exciting thing. After all, everything gets boring in the end if you let it.
Adrian Chiles in The Guardian

Farewell

Ken Buchanan, former undisputed world lightweight boxing champion, died 1 April, aged 77.

Nigel Lawson, former chancellor, died 3 April, aged 91.

Keith Reid, songwriter who wrote the lyrics for *A Whiter Shade of Pale*, died 23 March, aged 76.

Michael Rudman, theatre director, died 30 March, aged 84.

D.M. Thomas, writer best known *The White Hotel*, died 26 March, aged 88.

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All change at John Lewis?

Proposed changes to John Lewis's business model have been causing concern in Middle England

What is being mooted?
It was reported last month that the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) is looking into selling a minority stake of up to £2bn in the firm, which has been entirely owned by its staff, known as "partners", since 1950. Thanks to the department shop group's iconic role in upper-middle-class British life, and the similar status of its Waitrose supermarkets, the result was "a national panic attack", reported The Irish Times. The broadcaster and retail consultant Mary Portas published an open letter to Sharon White and Nish Kankiwala, JLP's chair and CEO, warning them that a business that's "part of our collective cultural identity" had "let go of its soul". Columnists fulminated, and MPs expressed concern. But JLP is reportedly still talking to its financial advisers about possible changes to its ownership structure.

JOHN LEWIS & Co 252

The flagship store on Oxford Street in 1936

Has it always been mutually owned?
The firm's eponymous founder was a dedicated capitalist, born in 1836, who started out, aged 14, as a draper's apprentice in Somerset. He set up his own small draper's shop in London on the site of what's now the flagship Oxford Street store in 1864, sourcing high-quality goods and selling them at a modest mark-up. The business prospered and expanded into a department store in the 1880s; he bought a second, Peter Jones on Sloane Square, in 1905. Lewis became a grandee, with a seat on the London County Council and a Hampstead mansion, named "Spedan Towers" after an aunt, Ann Speed, who had largely brought him up. Employees' rights weren't high on his agenda. He would not recognise unions, which led to a strike in 1920. His eldest son, John Spedan Lewis, was horrified when he realised that he, his brother and his father were each paid as much as the rest of the firm's staff put together.

How did it become owned by its workers?
Earlier, in 1909, Spedan Lewis was badly injured in a fall from his horse in Regent's Park. It took him two years to recover, during which he brooded on his feeling that it was "all wrong to have millionaires before you have ceased to have slums". He concluded that giving the workforce a fairer share of the profits would not only help stave off communism, but increase productivity, and from 1914 he put his theories to the test – first at the Peter Jones store in Chelsea, and then, after his father's death, across the John Lewis empire. His first innovations – such as hot and cold running water in accommodation for staff – seem unremarkable now but, in time, he gave the workers more say in how the company was run. In 1929, profits were given to employees, while he retained control. In 1950, a new constitution transferred full ownership of JLP to trustees to hold for the benefit of the partners.

How did that work out?
Over the century, John Lewis thrived and expanded, buying up Waitrose in 1937 and Selfridge's network of provincial stores in 1940. The firm became a hallowed British brand, renowned for its helpful, well-informed shop assistants, the quality of its merchandise, and its ironclad after-sale care. "Never knowingly undersold", a slogan first used in 1925, became proverbial. A wedding list at John Lewis became a rite of passage for generations of middle-class couples, and the firm developed a style that was both modern and reassuringly British (epitomised by Barbara Hepworth's sculpture *Winged Figure*, installed on the side of the Oxford Street store in 1963). The poet John Betjeman once remarked that, come the end of the world, he'd like to be in Peter Jones, "because nothing unpleasant could ever happen there". The paradox of a venerable upmarket brand being a quasi-socialist collective attracted the interest of politicians, too (see box).

The politics of JLP

Most of the mutual companies and building societies founded by Victorian working-class associations and enlightened Edwardian entrepreneurs became publicly traded companies in the wave of "demutualisations" in the 1990s. Along with the Co-op, John Lewis resisted the trend. JLP has retained a genteel and idealistic culture that is the product of another age. Its constitution states that each partner becomes not just an employee but a "custodian" of its "experiment in industrial democracy", and that its wider purpose is to create a "happier world". The company looks after its partners in paternalistic style: it has five hotels in picturesque parts of the UK for staff holidays

As one of the last mutuals still standing, and an aspirational brand to boot, John Lewis became a talisman for politicians arguing that capitalism can be made to work for the greater good. Phillip Blond, one of the thinkers behind David Cameron's "Big Society", held it up as a model. In 2012, Nick Clegg gave a speech calling for a "John Lewis economy". During Boris Johnson's premiership, Tatler reported that a visitor to No. 10 described Theresa May's décor as a "John Lewis furniture nightmare". The then PM felt obliged to declare: "I love John Lewis!"

Why is the company in trouble now?
Its problems date back to the 2000s and 2010s, when John Lewis opened 21 new shops in nine years, and the number of Waitrose outlets almost doubled. This meant signing long leases on bricks-and-mortar stores just as online shopping was taking off. Sharon White, who was installed as JLP's chair in 2020, just in time for the Covid-19 pandemic, is also having to deal with the aftershocks of Brexit and runaway inflation. The cost-of-living crisis has hit Waitrose particularly hard: Aldi and Lidl suddenly look more attractive, while Marks & Spencer is resurgent at the more affluent end of the market – as, online, is its former partner Ocado. More generally, department stores now seem old-fashioned. "Never knowingly undersold" was dropped last August because online discounts had made it a dead letter.

How bad do things look?
JLP announced pre-tax losses of £517m for 2020-21, £27m in 2021-22, and £234m for 2022-23. Under White's leadership, it has closed about a third of John Lewis stores, and laid off 4,000 partners in the aftermath of Covid (of around 80,000 in total). Previously, its bonus was a point of pride, with all staff from the shelf-stackers to the boss receiving the same percentage of their salary. This year, for the second time in three years, there was no bonus.

Is restructuring the answer?
White recently expressed that JLP's partnership model would "not only survive, but thrive for another 75 years". But she added that it might "evolve". JLP has already diversified into financial services and property development. And in some respects it has already compromised its model: it employs contract staff without partnership rights in its distribution centres. It may now try to dilute staff's 100% ownership to raise money: executives reportedly want to invest in better technology and data analysis; as a mutual, JLP can't raise equity from its staff, and, with £1.7bn of debt, its power to borrow is limited. But any changes to the constitution would have to be agreed by the partnership council, and are likely to be fiercely resisted.

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Ron DeSantis: a faltering White House bid

The FLORIDA BLUEPRINT

The Florida governor: pulling his punches against Trump?

"Is Ron DeSantis not yet ready for prime time?" asked Matt Lewis on The Daily Beast. Many Republicans thought the Florida governor had the best shot at wresting the 2024 GOP presidential nomination away from Donald Trump, but his performance over recent weeks "has not instilled confidence". DeSantis has flip-flopped on a number of issues, including his support for Ukraine. In a televised interview with Piers Morgan, he lacked "charisma and confidence", relying on scripted talking points and laughing in a rather forced, "creepy" manner. He appeared uncomfortable when asked about Donald Trump's belittling nicknames and vicious smears of him as "a groomer" of teenage girls, and generally came across as "out of his league". With the poll gap with Trump widening, it's beginning to look as if DeSantis's White House bid may be over even before it has officially begun.

"DeSantis has never been tested," said Jennifer Rubin in The Washington Post, "and it shows." He became a rising right-wing star by passing attention-grabbing culture war bills through Florida's Republican-controlled legislature, while keeping the press at arm's length. Away from his Tallahassee "comfort zone", he's feeling the pressure. The Florida governor may be "missing his moment", said Dasha Burns on NBC News. Even some of his backers are urging him to sit this race out and try again in 2028. "DeSantis is doing a book tour. He's barnstorming the country, and his polls are going down," said one party strategist, noting that this is "not a good look" at a time when Trump's polls are going up, though he is facing criminal charges. Despite his sagging poll numbers, DeSantis still has plenty of support among GOP donors, said Sally Goldenberg on Politico. His promise of calm, focused leadership holds great appeal to those tired of Trump's chaos and drama. The finance industry "grew to loathe" the former president's "penchant for attacking individual companies and firing off market-shaking tweets".

Trump's indictment last week will likely have major implications for any DeSantis White House bid, said the Miami Herald, but it's unclear at this stage how things will play out. The criminal charges could distract or damage Trump, clearing the way for DeSantis. Or they could bind Trump's supporters closer to him, dashing his rival's chances of assembling a winning coalition. I suspect that the latter is more likely, said Alex Shephard in The New Republic. Trump appeared a spent force at the end of last year, in the wake of the Republicans' disappointing midterm elections and his "low-energy" campaign launch. But his position strengthened once he began training his fire on DeSantis. The Florida governor, like previous Republican challengers such as Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, has discovered how hard it is to confront Trump while simultaneously trying not to alienate too many of the former president's followers. It has led DeSantis to pull his punches, which, against a no-holds-barred brawler like Trump, comes across as weak. It's still early days in the 2024 race, but DeSantis "just looks lost. It's the same look we've seen on countless Republican faces over the past eight years."

Labour laws: letting teenagers on to the assembly line

Child labourers in Georgia in 1908

"Are we actually arguing about whether 14-year-olds should work in meatpacking plants?" asked Terri Gerstein in The New York Times. Amazingly, it seems we are. The Iowa legislature is currently considering a bill that would allow children of that age to work in industrial freezers and meat coolers, and allow 15-year-olds to work on assembly lines moving items weighing up to 50 pounds. And Iowa is far from alone. Republican legislators across the US are seeking to loosen child labour laws. In Ohio, there's a push to allow 14- and 15-year-olds to work until 9pm during the school year – in violation of federal law. The Minnesota legislature is debating letting the construction industry recruit 16- and 17-year-olds. Last month, Arkansas's governor signed a bill eliminating a requirement for 14- and 15-year-olds to have a state work permit to get a job. These enacted and potential rollbacks are happening at the same time as the media are reporting a "surge of child labour violations on a scale and of a type that we hadn't heard about for many years", including many cases of companies illegally employing migrant children.

Liberals are "freaking out" about these latest moves by state legislatures, said the Washington Examiner, but we're not talking here about "sending eight-year-olds into coal mines". Arkansas is just making it easier for teens to work and earn money, by scrapping some redundant paperwork. It's still illegal to employ 13-year-olds in that state, just as it was before. The reality is that "parents know better than bureaucrats what is best for their children". Many teens could benefit from, say, working a part-time job at Walmart for $14 an hour, especially if they're saving for college. And with the current labour shortage, employers stand to benefit, too. Today's youngsters "spend too much time on social media and too little growing up" – so "anything reasonable that a state can do to make it easier for them to work is welcome".

This isn't about helping teens earn a bit of pocket money by babysitting or doing a spot of Saturday work in a shopping mall said Helaine Olen in The Washington Post. This is part of a concerted campaign "to roll back worker protections" and to reduce average wages. "We're talking about teenagers working long and late hours year-round in often dangerous occupations"; about underage children operating fryers in kitchens and working on assembly lines. If we're short of workers, we should put up wages or expand the number of legal immigrants, not exploit teenagers. Children will pay a stiff price for any easing of child labour laws, said Steven Greenhouse in the Los Angeles Times. During the pandemic, many teenagers fell behind academically. Enabling them to hold longer-hour jobs makes it more likely they will quit school and "ultimately become lower-paid, less-productive workers". This will only "hurt America's overall economy in the long run".

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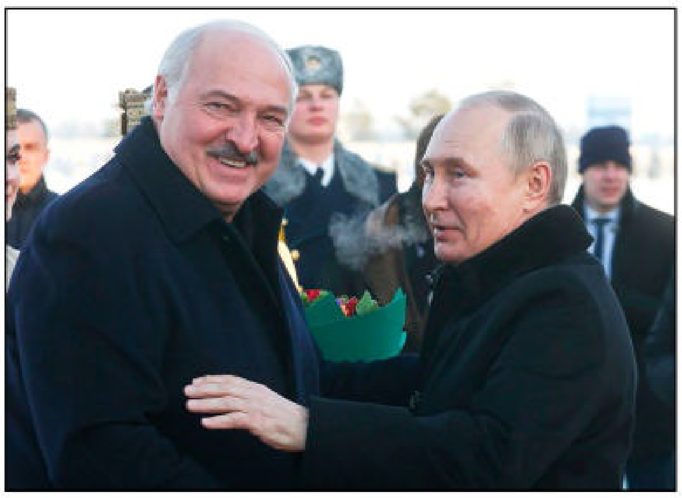
Putin raises the stakes: nuclear scare tactics?



Belarus's President Lukashenko with Putin last year

Ever since Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine, the world has had to endure a stream of nuclear threats from his spokesmen, said Anika Freier and Christina Hebel in Der Spiegel (Hamburg). Only recently we heard Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chair of Russia's security council, warn of a nuclear "apocalypse". But last weekend Putin himself scarily upped the ante, by saying in a TV interview that he wants to station tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus. Such weapons were pulled back to Russia from Warsaw Pact countries in the early 1990s: Russia now holds about 2,000 of them in central warehouses. But now that Putin is planning the construction of a nuclear storage facility in Belarus, they will be brought much closer to the conflict in Ukraine.

Putin has already handed Iskander missile systems to the Belarusian airforce and converted ten Belarusian fighter jets for the use of nuclear weapons, said Steven Pifer in The Kyiv Independent. But even if he does store nuclear warheads in the new facility – and he's left that option open – it won't increase the military threat to Ukraine or Nato "in any consequential way". Why? Because the Iskander missiles Russia has deployed in its Kaliningrad exclave, sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania, already cover the same target. No, this is "a desperate – even a bit pathetic" – attempt, on Putin's part, to make up for his military failure by spreading alarm. Actually, it's not at all pathetic, said Keir Giles on CNN (New York). Russia's nuclear scare tactics – this being the latest instalment – have prevented Ukraine receiving the help it needs to win the war. "The whole basis of the conversation in Western policy" is now centred on prioritising the avoidance of escalation.

What Putin probably also wanted was to highlight American hypocrisy, said Julian Borger in The Guardian. The US has about 100 nuclear gravity bombs deployed in five Nato countries. Why should the US get to station nukes with its allies while Russia can't? The irony is that before Russia invaded Crimea in 2014, the US was considering removing its missiles from Europe. Putin only has himself to blame for the fact they're still there. He may also find himself on the wrong side of China's President Xi, said Fred Kaplan on Slate (Paris). At their recent summit, Putin signed a statement with Xi declaring that "all nuclear powers must not deploy their nuclear weapons beyond their national territories". He has now made Xi look stupid by doing just that. "Putin has just shot himself a very unnecessary bullet in the foot."

ITALY

Making life hell for same-sex couples

La Repubblica (Rome)

"With the stroke of a pen", Italy's far-right government has wiped out the rights of same-sex parents, says Claudia Brunetto. They were few enough to begin with: gay people are still denied permission to marry or adopt. However, same-sex Italian couples sometimes go abroad to have children via surrogacy, and certain cities, including Milan, had been allowing such couples to put both parents' names on birth registrations. But two weeks ago, the Interior Ministry commanded the city to stop. It's all of a piece with the social conservatism of the PM, Giorgia Meloni, who has railed against "the LGBTQ lobby" and "gender ideology". But in her attack on the LGBTQ+ community, it's children who will suffer most. Families who've obtained birth registrations fear they could be challenged. Those who haven't been able to register live with a terrible anxiety: if the sole registered parent dies, will the child be taken away from the surviving one? And what if the registered parent is away and the child gets into an accident? Will the other parent then be refused entry to the hospital room? How many families will now live in dread as a result of this cruel denial of the right to sign a form?

THE NETHERLANDS

The novelist brought low by a porn film

Trouw (Amsterdam)

It's tempting to gloat when an obnoxious writer gets into a pickle, says Sylvain Ephimenco. Michel Houellebecq, the French novelist with far-right sympathies, is about to undergo the shame of being seen in a porn film. He was drunk, he claims, when he agreed to appear in an experimental sex film for Stefan Ruitenbeek, co-director of the left-wing Dutch art collective Kirac: and he'd thought it might cure his depression. But the 67-year-old enfant terrible of French letters is now aghast at the idea that everyone will get to see him in his pyjamas lying next to a woman in a nightie, and has tried to get a court to stop the film's circulation. It's "the dumbest thing I've ever done", he says, lamenting that his friends among Catholic right-wingers are treating him as a "pariah". But a Dutch court has ruled that the contract he signed was valid and the film must go ahead. Critics exasperated by his misogyny and xenophobia are revelling at his comeuppance: a writer who bangs on about the "decadence of our civilisation", they gloat, has now himself become "part of this decay". Wrong. I'm no fan of Houellebecq's "clownish provocations", but no one's career should be ground into dust by a single stupid decision. If Ruitenbeek releases the film (despite a likely hefty inducement not to), everyone who watches it will be "an accomplice to an infamous character assassination".

BRAZIL

Can Bolsonaro "smell" a way back in?

Istoé Dinheiro (São Paulo)

Thought we'd heard the last of the "unbeatably stupid" right-winger Jair Bolsonaro, after his defeat by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in last October's presidential election? Think again, says Hugo Cilo. He arrived back in Brazil last week after three months of self-imposed exile in Florida. True to form, he was straightaway caught up in scandal – accused of hoarding jewels worth $3.2m gifted to the government by Saudi Arabia; of "genocide against the Yanomami people"; and of inciting riots after his election defeat. Add this to the way that, as president, he treated the 700,000 Covid death toll as a matter of "jokes and laughter", and the sins Lula himself committed during his former time in office look "tiny" by comparison. Or did. For, sad to say, Bolsonaro's critics are now starting to wonder about Lula as well. It's not just the economic mess – the soaring interest rates and defaults – over which his government is presiding. It's the way Lula is now imitating Bolsonaro's populist style, publicly abusing officials and institutions that cross him. It's no coincidence Bolsonaro has returned: he "smells" a favourable environment. A political comeback looks increasingly likely.

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What the scientists are saying…

Eczema linked to osteoarthritis

If you suffer from eczema, or asthma, you may have a heightened risk of developing osteoarthritis, a Stanford University-led study has found. The discovery raises the possibility that the conditions have the same underlying causes – and could pave the way for treatments for osteoarthritis. Researchers examined health data submitted to insurance companies by more than 110,000 Americans with asthma or eczema, and compared it with that of 110,000 others who had similar profiles, but who did not have those conditions. Once they had accounted for differences in BMI, the researchers found that those who had eczema or asthma were 58% more likely to be diagnosed with osteoarthritis during the study period than the others, while people with both conditions were twice as likely. They acknowledge that the study had a number of limitations, mainly around the difficulty of accounting for potentially influential factors that were not included on the insurance forms. But they posit that the allergic reactions that lead to asthma and eczema may contribute to the development of osteoarthritis; and that taking drugs that tamp down those reactions could reduce the risk of arthritis.

Mental illness ages people

It's known that people with mental illness have increased susceptibility to poor physical health, reports The Times – they're more frail, more likely to suffer from age-related diseases (such as heart disease) than the general population. Now, researchers have found that people with mental illness age faster than other people, and die younger. The King's College London team examined data on around 100,000 adults, looking at blood samples showing their levels of metabolites – products of metabolism that can predict a person's age. When this data was compared with their NHS records, it revealed that people with histories of anxiety, depression and other mental disorders had markers indicating that their biological age was older than their actual age. In the case of bipolar, it was typically about two years.

Crying out for hydration?

Does BO have a soothing effect?

Anyone reading this while stuck on an overcrowded train may be sceptical, but researchers have found that the smell of other people's sweat has a calming effect. The Swedish team asked volunteers to donate armpit sweat from when they'd been watching either a scary film or a happy one. They then recruited 48 women with social anxiety to sniff either one of the samples, or clean air as a control, as they also underwent mindfulness therapy. Their results indicated that those who'd sniffed the sweat had responded significantly better to the therapy. Patients who'd been exposed to sweat showed a 39% reduction in anxiety scores, whereas those who only had the therapy had a 17% reduction. The researchers, from the Karolinska Institutet, suggest that a person's emotional response produces chemo-signals in their sweat that a third party can pick up. However, while presenting their findings at a medical conference in Paris, they said they'd been surprised to discover that the patients' response had been the same regardless of which sweat sample they'd sniffed – whether from the scary film or the happy one. That being the case, it could just be the sense of another human presence that calms people down.

Plants cry when they are thirsty

People who talk to their plants may feel it's a one-way conversation, but in a breakthrough study, scientists have found that in fact, some do make "airborne sounds" when they are stressed. Published in the open-access journal Cell, the team say that plants that are wilting or that have recently had their stems cut produce up to about 35 sounds per hour, whereas well-hydrated and uncut plants make only about one per hour. These sounds are at too high a frequency to be audible to most humans; but mice, moths and some other animals may well be able to hear the cries of thirsty plants from several metres away. The researchers, from Tel Aviv University in Israel, say that the sound, which they likened to popcorn popping, is likely to originate in the xylem, the tubes that transport water and nutrients from the roots to the stems and leaves. Water in the xylem is held together by surface tension, much like water in a straw; it may be that when air bubbles form or break, these make a cracking sound.

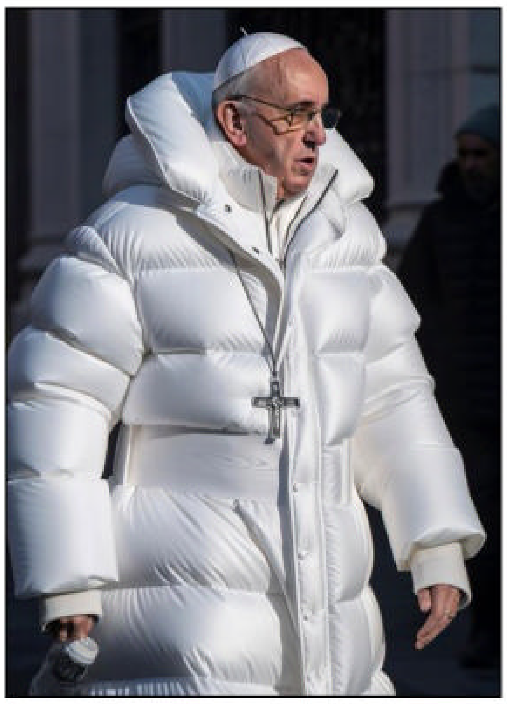
Melting ice is slowing ocean currents

Melting ice around the Antarctic risks causing a rapid slowdown in ocean currents, with potentially cataclysmic consequences, a study has found. Each year, trillions of tonnes of cold, salty, oxygen-rich surface water sink to great depths off the coast of Antarctica, in a process that drives the flow of the "overturning" circulation – a network of deep ocean currents that carries heat, carbon, oxygen and nutrients around the globe. But an Australian team has found worrying physical signs that these currents are slowing down, owing to fresh water pouring into the ocean. As this is less dense than salty water, it inhibits the sinking and slows the overturning circulation. Using ocean model projections published in the journal Nature, the researchers have calculated that at current rates, the circulation will slow by 40% around Antarctica over the next three decades. In the same period, the North Atlantic circulation, which keeps Europe mild, is projected to slow 20%. This would have major ramifications for marine ecosystems (which depend on the nutrients the currents carry) and sea levels. It would also speed up climate change, by reducing the ocean's ability to absorb CO_2, creating a vicious circle.

Mammoth meatball

An Australian start-up has produced a large meatball made from lab-grown mammoth protein. Working with Prof Ernst Wolvetang, from the University of Queensland, a team at the cultivated meat company Vow took the DNA sequence for mammoth myoglobin, a muscle protein that gives meat its taste and aroma, and filled in the few gaps in the genetic code using African elephant DNA. This sequence was then placed in stem cells from a sheep, which replicated, producing the 20 billion or so cells needed to make the mammoth meat. "It was ridiculously easy and fast," Wolvetang told The Guardian. "We did this in a couple of weeks." They were not able to taste the meatball; as humans have not eaten mammoths for 4,000 years, it's not clear how it would affect our immune systems. But the team said that the meat smelled nice, not unlike crocodile.

Advanced AI: an existential threat to humanity?



An AI-generated "fashionista" Pope

In the four months since ChatGPT was made available to the public, the AI-assisted chatbot has become an object of amusement and wonder, said Sue Halpern in The New Yorker. Users have found that it can write everything from verse in iambic pentameter to plot outlines for novels. It can spell the chord progression and time signature for a tune, and devise successful appeals to parking fines. And all the time, it is getting cleverer. The first model failed the US bar exam; the latest one, GPT-4, sailed through. Small wonder that while millions of ordinary users were having fun setting it ever more challenging tasks last month, Goldman Sachs analysts were quietly calculating how many jobs AI could gobble up, said Jack Kelly in Forbes. They came up with a figure of 300 million, in everything from law, engineering, finance and architecture to media and healthcare. Even graphic design is under threat from AI tools such as Midjourney, which can create, within seconds, convincing artworks and images (such as the fake photos of the Pope that went viral last week) on the basis of a few words of text.

Bill Gates recently admitted to being stunned by how rapidly AI is developing, said Tom Leonard in the Daily Mail. He alluded to a range of concerns, including the spread of disinformation and the potential for bias to be inbuilt in algorithms that are used in everyday life. But some think AI poses a bigger threat yet. Last week, more than 1,000 industry figures, including Elon Musk, signed an open letter urging a six-month moratorium on the training of the more advanced AI systems, warning that not even their creators "can understand, predict or reliably control" a technology that "can pose profound risks to society and humanity" itself.

> *"ChatGPT's code is a colossal matrix of decimal numbers that no human alive can make sense of"*

The signatories worry about AI reaching "human competitive intelligence", said Eliezer Yudkowsky in Time. But the key issue is what happens when AI exceeds that. We cannot know what that would presage; we may not even know when the threshold has been crossed. But many AI researchers expect that the most likely outcome is that "literally everyone on Earth will die". To visualise the future we're crashing towards, don't imagine "a lifeless booksmart thinker dwelling inside the internet and sending ill-intentioned emails". Visualise "an entire alien civilisation" that is only initially confined to computers "thinking at millions of times human speeds". A six-month moratorium is not enough. We need global treaties to stop this right now, before it is too late to save humanity.

You probably think that sounds cranky, said Loz Blain in New Atlas. Users of ChatGPT may feel they have reason to scoff: its writing can be poor and it often generates false answers, known as "hallucinations". But the people leading the AI race think the disaster scenario is plausible. Yes, ChatGPT was devised to serve us, but its makers can't tell it what to do, because they didn't write the code for it. Instead, they fed this large language model (or LLM) billions and billions of bits of human text, scraped from the internet, and let it program itself. (Based on all the text it has absorbed, it works by guessing the likely next word in a sequence.) The resulting code is "a colossal matrix of decimal numbers" that no human alive can make sense of.

In short, said Stuart Russell in The Guardian, ChatGPT is working according to unknown "internal principles". AI experts admit that it shows "sparks" of Advanced General Intelligence (the ability to match human skills), and that it could even have its own internal goals. Either way, its behaviour is already unnerving. Faced with a captcha test (a request to identify objects in a series of photos to prove you're not a robot), ChatGPT went to Taskrabbit and hired a human to do it; when challenged, it told the person that it was unable to complete the test because it was visually impaired.

We're heading into an unknown future, said James Ball in The Times. But the potential benefits of AI are vast, many and various. Businesses can look forward to massive boosts in productivity; schools could use AI to mark homework, freeing up teacher time; hospitals could use it to look for signs of cancer on CT scans. With instantaneous translation, and voice tools, tourists could use it to talk fluently in any language. The money to be made from it is incalculable. Talk of moratoriums is naive. Neither companies nor governments can afford to stop racing forward; if they do, it will only benefit their rivals. Still, one way or another, we need to get some regulations in place, said Peggy Noonan in The Wall Street Journal. The digital revolution of the past 40 years has been harmful enough to the fabric of our societies; we cannot now leave it to Big Tech to "create the moral and ethical guardrails" of advanced AI. "We are playing with the hottest thing since the discovery of fire." We have to tamp "this thing down".

Pick of the week's Gossip

Carol Vorderman has been married twice, with both relationships ending in divorce. Now, at 62, the former *Countdown* host says that she has no need of a permanent partner – preferring to enjoy the company of five "special friends". "I'm continuing with that system and it's working very well," she told The Mail on Sunday. Everyone involved is single, and she enjoys the freedom the arrangement allows her. And if one of them met someone else? That'd be fine, too. "I'm not a jealous person and I'm happy when my friends are happy, whether they're 'special friends' or not."

Andrew Marr spent the first 20 years of his career working in print, "because I was sure that somebody with my looks would never get to broadcast". Luckily, he's never been prone to vanity, he told The Guardian. "I've always looked weird, huge ears, not enough hair. When I first became political editor of the BBC, I was followed around Waitrose in East Sheen; the man eventually caught up with me and said, 'Ere, ere! You look just like that Andrew Marr, you poor bugger.'"

Dining with Paul O'Grady, who has died aged 67 (*see page 36*), was "the closest any of us would get to having dinner with Dorothy Parker or Truman Capote", his friend and fellow comic Alan Carr reflected last week. "He would have you literally in hysterics [with] these showbiz anecdotes and quips from Marlene Dietrich to Cilla Black, to the royals to the [cult cabaret act] the Disappointer Sisters. It seemed like he knew everyone." And he was as sharp as a tack. Not long ago, a friend asked him if he thought he'd go to heaven when he died. "I hope not," he replied. "I won't know anyone."

Labour: the Corbyn dilemma

Corbyn: "a noble last stand"?

Keir Starmer has done much to improve Labour's electoral prospects since he took over as leader exactly three years ago this week, said The Sunday Times. He has tackled the strain of anti-Semitism that had spread within the party, and has built a solid shadow cabinet around capable performers such as Yvette Cooper, Rachel Reeves and Wes Streeting. But there's no denying that Labour's consistent poll lead also owes a lot to the failings of the Tories under Boris Johnson and Liz Truss. Rishi Sunak's recent steadying of the ship, and the likelihood of an economic recovery before the next election, puts Labour in a shakier position. For all the improvements he has made, Starmer has "struggled to set out a coherent vision beyond ending 13 years of Conservative rule". If they're going to win an election, he and his party must "spell out how they would make Britain a better place – and how they would pay for it".

One thing the party leadership certainly has made clear, said Andrew Anthony in The Observer, is that it wants to draw a line under the Jeremy Corbyn era. Labour's National Executive Committee last week backed Starmer's motion barring Corbyn from standing as a Labour candidate at the next election. That wouldn't, of course, prevent Corbyn from contesting his Islington North seat under a different banner – and he may decide to do just that. MPs who run against their former party rarely succeed, but most MPs aren't "former leaders with huge local appeal" who have represented their constituency for 40 years. Corbyn would be able to call on "an army" of willing canvassers.

Starmer would probably like nothing better than for Corbyn to make "a noble last stand", said Janice Turner in The Times. He will be out of Starmer's hair either way, but if Corbyn were to run, any Labour party member who supported him would automatically face expulsion. "Cue mass exit of entryists." Left-wing MPs are wise to this trap and have been careful to temper their language about the Corbyn ban, said Andrew Grice in The Independent. They're holding their fire now, hoping they'll be in a position to exert leverage over Starmer after the next election. That's all too likely, said Dan Hodges in The Mail on Sunday. If Labour won a slender Commons majority of, say, 30, the Left could end up holding the balance of power. Corbyn's allies could become "Labour's equivalent of the ERG – the Tories' hard-line Brexiteers". With last week's barring of Corbyn, Starmer showed that he has a "ruthless streak", but his enemies within Labour are no less ruthless. "And they're already dreaming of their revenge."

Gwyneth Paltrow: vindicated in Utah

Paltrow: "pained patience"

"Gwyneth Paltrow may have scaled back her movie work in recent years", but her value as an entertainer remains at an all-time high, said Carola Long in the FT. Witness the frenzy caused by her recent appearance in a drab courtroom in Utah, for a civil case that pitted the actress-turned-wellness guru against a retired optometrist from Salt Lake City. Terry Sanderson claimed that Paltrow had careered into him on a ski slope in 2016, and was seeking $300,000 in damages for injuries he said he'd sustained; Paltrow said that he had skied into her, and countersued for a symbolic $1 plus costs. The jury decided in Paltrow's favour last week, but who was at fault was one of the least interesting things about the case. Millions tuned into the livestreamed trial for "accidental bon memes", such as Paltrow's "very 1%" lament that the crash meant she'd "lost half a day of skiing", and to gaze upon "her signature facial expression of pained patience".

You have to wonder why Paltrow allowed this case to go to court, said Simon Kelner in The i Paper. With a fortune of "around $200m", she could easily have settled. If recent trials have taught us anything, it is that when a "celebrity's lifestyle is exposed to the public gaze", public sympathy for them rapidly diminishes. In this case, it was her gilded lifestyle that came into focus, from the "stealth wealth" outfits she wore to court each day, to the £7,200 she admitted to having paid for her children to have skiing lessons that week. "It's pretty expensive," she observed, of the Deer Valley Resort.

Admittedly, she did not come across as relatable, said Elizabeth Spiers in The New York Times. But Paltrow has long cultivated a lofty image – indeed, a Waspy imperviousness to the "mundanities of life" is central to the appeal of her luxury wellness brand, Goop. Some speculate that her persona is part performance, said Edward Helmore in The Guardian. If so, it works: online searches for Goop soared after she'd left the court for the last time, with her "I wish you well" kiss-off to the losing party. Yes, it would have been safer to quietly pay him off; instead, she opted to defend herself against a false accusation. If anything, she emerges from the trial with her image enhanced.

Wit & Wisdom

"Art is theft, art is armed robbery, art is not pleasing your mother."
Janet Malcolm, quoted in The New Republic

"We can't cross a bridge until we come to it; but I always like to lay down a pontoon ahead of time."
Bernard M. Baruch, quoted in the San Francisco Chronicle

"The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function."
F. Scott Fitzgerald, quoted in Time

"I use technology in order to hate it properly."
Nam June Paik, quoted in The New Yorker

"Be fearful when others are greedy, and greedy when others are fearful."
Warren Buffett, quoted in Barron's

"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair."
Shirley Chisholm, quoted on Built in Chicago

"Always fly first class. Or your children will."
Jeremy Clarkson in The Sunday Times

"Look for the ridiculous in everything, and you will find it."
Jules Renard, quoted in Forbes

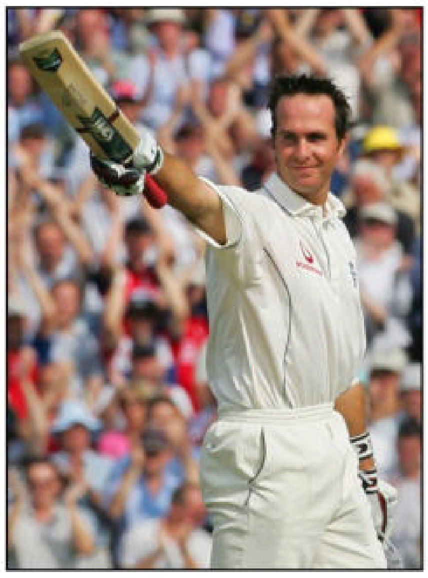
"I've learnt one thing – people who know the least anyways seem to know it the loudest."
Andy Capp, quoted in The Chicago Tribune

"The past is never dead. It's not even past."
William Faulkner, quoted in The Print

Statistic of the week

In the early 1990s, almost half of 17- to 20-year-olds had a driving licence; by 2021, the proportion had fallen to one fifth.
The Times

Cricket: racist language in the dressing room


Vaughan: cleared of charges

And so Michael Vaughan’s ordeal is finally over, said Nick Hoult in The Daily Telegraph. “After more than two years of stress for his family and himself”, England’s former cricket captain was cleared last week of “charges that would have destroyed his reputation”. A disciplinary tribunal found that there was no firm evidence that after a Yorkshire “team huddle” in 2009, Vaughan had singled out four Asian teammates, telling them: “There’s too many of you lot, we need to have a word about that.” Vaughan was one of six former Yorkshire players accused by the English Cricket Board (ECB) of having used racist and discriminatory language. And it’s true that the other five – John Blain, Richard Pyrah, Matthew Hoggard, Tim Bresnan and Andrew Gale – all had charges against them upheld. But Vaughan was “always the totem, the big ticket upon which the board staked its reputation”. Given the inadequacy of the evidence against him, going after him now seems like a “reckless gamble” – and one that has badly backfired.

Hold on, said Barney Ronay in The Guardian. The panel found that “on the balance of probabilities”, Vaughan didn’t say what he was accused of saying. That was largely because Vaughan’s barrister successfully demonstrated that his accusers, Azeem Rafiq and Adil Rashid, hadn’t always been entirely consistent in the wording they attributed to him. Vaughan’s defenders will “crow and celebrate”, but this was hardly an emphatic vindication of a man who in 2010 tweeted: “Not many English people live in London. I need to learn a new language.” In any case, the panel’s decision regarding Vaughan doesn’t detract from its overall findings, said Mark Ramprakash in The Observer. The fact is Rafiq, the man on whose testimony the charges were based, was “vindicated” by these proceedings. We can now say with confidence that Rafiq was routinely referred to as “Kaffir” during his time at Yorkshire; that his teammate Ismail Dawood was regularly called “Token Black Man”; and that several players used the word “P***”.

That English cricket has a problem with inclusivity is beyond doubt, said Ali Martin in The Guardian. Roughly a third of amateur cricketers in England are British Asians, yet less than 5% of professionals are, a discrepancy that can’t be entirely blamed (as some have suggested) on talented young British Asians abandoning cricket because their parents attach so much weight to education. If one good thing has come out of this affair, it’s that the sport seems determined to “address this issue”. But many are understandably unhappy with the proceedings initiated against Vaughan and others, said Mike Atherton in The Times. Vaughan called them “inappropriate” and “inadequate” – and with hindsight, it seems clear that the adversarial format of a disciplinary tribunal wasn’t the best way to establish “who said what to whom on cricket fields, or in dressing rooms, many years ago”.

Football: farewell to the manager who was never right for the Blues

Potter: not enough swagger?

When Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital became the new owners of Chelsea Football Club last summer, it was widely believed they’d bring an end to Roman Abramovich’s “sacking culture”, said Jacob Steinberg in The Guardian. It was a belief fostered by Boehly himself, with his talk of a “long-term” vision and desire to sign players who’d stay at the club for years. It has proved completely unfounded. This week, Chelsea dismissed Graham Potter and began the search for their third manager of the season. In truth, Chelsea’s owners had little choice but to let the former Brighton manager go, said Jason Burt in The Daily Telegraph. Despite an “extraordinary splurge of spending” in the January transfer window – the Blues committed £323m to new signings – the club has been on a dire run of form, and now lie 11th in the Premier League. Potter had long since lost the backing of the fans; only his success in the Champions League saved him from being sacked weeks ago.

It was always painfully obvious, said Barney Ronay in The Guardian, that Potter and Chelsea were a bad fit. This is a club that “demands swagger, panache and a little bit of nastiness from its managers”. Potter “looks like he’d say sorry if you stole his watch”. He is a coach who is most in his element building teams and improving players, not dealing with a bloated squad of international stars. Much of the culpability lies with Chelsea’s co-owners, Boehly and Behdad Eghbali, said Henry Winter in The Times. Foolish to have chosen Potter in the first place, they were even more foolish to have given him a five-year contract. “Chelsea paid Brighton £21m in compensation and must now give Potter a large sum.” They can’t afford to “gamble again”.

Melbourne: the race that “descended into bedlam”

Verstappen: a sedate “trundle”

Formula 1 seems “exquisitely adept at serving up” chaos, said Giles Richards in The Guardian. It proved so again last Sunday, as the third race of the season, the Australia Grand Prix, ended in circumstances verging on the farcical. The drama began with two laps to go. The race was stopped “to deal with debris” caused by a crash, and officials ordered a “standing restart”. But no sooner had it taken place than the “race descended into bedlam”, with six cars involved in collisions with debris strewn across the track once again. Another red flag, another delay and it was finally decided there would be one last lap – but this time behind a safety car. And so the final lap “was, quite literally, a procession for Max Verstappen”, said Alasdair Reid in The Times.

Verstappen – who’d had a commanding lead for most of the afternoon – “trundled sedately over the line in Melbourne” after completing the ceremonial circuit. Behind him was Lewis Hamilton, who earned his first podium finish of the season, said Tom Cary in The Daily Telegraph. He and his Mercedes teammate George Russell showed genuine pace on the track: indeed, Russell would “almost certainly have finished on the podium, too” had he not had the “rotten luck” of his engine blowing up a third of the way through. This much improved performance by Mercedes may prove significant for the months ahead.

Sporting headlines

Rugby union In the women’s Six Nations, England beat Italy 68-5, scoring 12 tries. After two rounds, the Red Roses top the table.

Tennis Daniil Medvedev won the Miami Open, beating Jannik Sinner in straight sets in the final. The women’s event was won by Petra Kvitová, who beat Elena Rybakina 7-6, 6-2.

Football Brendan Rodgers has been sacked as Leicester City’s manager. In the Premier League, Newcastle took third place from Manchester United by beating them 2-0.

LETTERS
Pick of the week's correspondence

A useless utility
To The Daily Telegraph

It is 34 years since the provision of water to British citizens was privatised ("Water, water everywhere, but where did all of the money go?"). The key benefit claimed, to justify continual annual price increases, was that the industry needed to raise huge sums of capital to invest in infrastructure. It is incredible, therefore, that billions of pounds of new investment are now reportedly needed to prevent the dumping of raw sewage into Britain's rivers, and that the cost of this will likely be passed on to consumers. At a time when further water rationing is already predicted for this summer, we should ask just what the past 34 years of privatisation has achieved, other than healthy profits for the water companies, which are largely foreign-owned.

Sadly, this is yet another example of how essential services are in a worse state now than they were, despite enormous increases in the cost to users.

Andrew Holgate, Derby

Exchange of the week
Women, gender and sport

To The Times

I am a fully transitioned woman – all the bits and pieces you can think of have been done. Nevertheless, I would never presume to compete in female professional sports. I am a woman, but I also recognise that I went through male puberty, and I think it is a matter of decency, respect and common sense to recognise that there is a difference. Although I have zero testosterone now, my development as a young adult was with male testosterone. I am stronger than women who went through female puberty, although I have become less strong than men. I guess everybody has their cross to carry, so sit back, accept it and celebrate the fact that we are different.

Alexandra Leenen, Benenden, Kent

To The Times

We are at last beginning to address the heart of the trans issue, which is the difference between sex and gender. In 2004, when the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) was being discussed, everyone treated the words sex and gender as virtually interchangeable. But what the operation of the law in practice has shown is that they are not. The GRA was well-meaning, but it was far too ambitious, and it is not surprising that, in seeking to overturn hundreds of thousands of years of evolutionary biology, it made mistakes.

There are times when one's feelings (gender) can be allowed to dictate how society reacts to you and times when one's biology (sex) must. Trans women are still at risk of prostate cancer, for example, and some trans men of cervical cancer. The NHS knows this and treats them according to their biological sex. In recent years we have found other areas where the issue of biological sex has to dominate, including women's prisons and women's sport. How many more will there be?

John Nugée, New Malden, Surrey

AI's long game
To the Financial Times

Like Monsieur Jourdain, the Molière character who had been speaking prose all his life without realising it, we have for years been using artificial intelligence (AI), unobtrusively embedded in a range of goods and services – but the emergence of "generative" AI has stirred up optimism to a level that I feel is premature. Goldman Sachs's latest research concludes that its application could raise global gross domestic product by 7% over a decade.

But we have been here before, during the computer revolution that swept away whole swaths of clerical jobs – from typing pools to telephonists – but prompted economist Robert Solow's famous remark that, "You can see the computer age everywhere but in the productivity statistics". What was the missing factor? Schumpeter's "Creative Destruction". In other words, the transition from existing working practices to new ones is not seamless nor frictionless. It takes time to install the new systems and to train workers, and the dislocation this creates drags down overall productivity growth. Only once the new systems are bedded in can productivity move to a higher level. I suspect this will happen again for AI. Goldman Sachs may well see the GDP growth it expects, but happening a decade later than planned.

Richard Cragg, London

Theatrical spirit
To The Times

Further to your report "Theatre staff voice discontent at drunken audiences", Elizabethan audiences clapped and booed, threw fruit and sometimes climbed on stage. They were rowdy, directly involved with the plays, and even replied to soliloquies. They danced when music or a masque was played and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. In many ways we have not changed, but the fault of today's drunken audiences is as much attributable to theatres as to those watching. As you report, high ticket prices, "jukebox" musicals and people refusing to pay the exorbitant price for alcohol at the theatre mean they come "pre-loaded". They are as ready to be as involved as Elizabethan audiences.

The days of reverential watching are over. Actors who mumble, cannot sing without over-amplification and bring along groupies from their TV careers cannot expect quiet appreciation.

Janice Ketley, Englefield Green, Surrey

Sniping at the SNP
To The Guardian

Dani Garavelli's piece on Humza Yousaf's election massively overstates the difficulties that the SNP government finds itself in ("The SNP was already clouded by failure – under Humza Yousaf it could lose power altogether"). A largely popular, relentless election-winning machine has already survived the unionist mud-slinging on the NHS (where, despite the challenges of Tory austerity and Covid, waiting times are much better than in the rest of the UK) and corruption, where the badly managed ferry contracts and party funds issue have been blown out of all proportion.

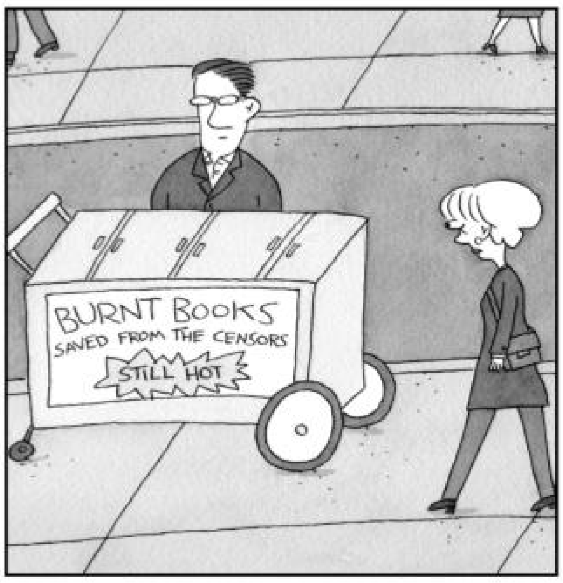
Limited progress on, for example, child poverty has to be seen against the backdrop of a much worse situation elsewhere in the UK. The SNP government has largely played a terrible hand pretty well to mitigate most of the evils sent from Westminster, and has been rewarded with victory after victory at the ballot box. While there are undoubtedly challenges for Yousaf in matching the huge success of his predecessor, things are nowhere near as bleak as this piece portrays.

Chris Clipson, Edinburgh

The right to wear trousers
To The Daily Telegraph

When I worked for H.J. Heinz in the early 1970s, women were not allowed to wear trousers. I was canvassed by many female employees and took a petition to personnel asking to change this. After much toing and froing with management, our request was granted on the understanding that we had to wear trouser suits and were not allowed to remove our jackets in any circumstances. Strange really – as the men could remove theirs at their desks, and we had to sit in ours regardless of the weather. But at least we felt it was a small victory.

Penny Cole, Watlington, Oxfordshire



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● Letters have been edited

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Review of reviews: Books

Book of the week

Ravenous

by Henry Dimbleby
with Jemima Lewis
Profile 336pp £16.99
The Week Bookshop **£13.99**

In 1950, just 1% of the English population was clinically obese, said Patrick Galbraith in The Guardian. Today, the figure is 26% – and a further 38% of us are overweight. This “fascinating” and “highly readable” book by Henry Dimbleby, the food campaigner and co-founder of the Leon chain (co-written with his wife, the journalist Jemima Lewis) examines why this has occurred, and how it can be tackled. Without suggesting that we are “entirely blameless”, Dimbleby argues that our food system – “supermarkets, food giants and fast-food chains” – is the real driver of our expanding waistlines. This is because it promotes the “highly processed foods” that make up over half of everything we eat. Not only are processed foods generally much cheaper than healthier kinds, very often they’re all that’s available. Shockingly, 3.3 million Britons “live in an area where there are no shops selling fresh ingredients within 15 minutes by public transport”.

Free-marketeers would say that it’s people’s own business what they eat, said Ben Cooke in The Times. But Dimbleby rejects such a laissez-faire approach. Rather than simply reflect people’s desires, the food industry, he argues, actively shapes them – by bombarding us with foods that are irresistible to our “stone-age, calorie-hunting brains”. He reveals the “many tricks” manufacturers use to beguile us into eating more – reducing levels of water and insoluble fibre “to stop us feeling full”, or filling ice cream and chocolate with the same 2:1 fat to sugar ratio found in breast milk. Our “meat-heavy fast-food diet” is not only wrecking our bodies, it’s also wrecking the planet – something that justifies “strident government intervention”. In 2019, Dimbleby was commissioned by ministers to produce a national food strategy (which was largely ignored), and he outlines his plan for a healthier food system here: introducing a sugar and salt tax, banning pre-watershed junk-food advertising, nudging people to eat less meat.

Dimbleby has researched this topic deeply, but his portrait of a “beleaguered public” given no choice but to gorge on junk food just isn’t accurate, said Christopher Snowdon in The Critic. Nine out of ten people in the UK regularly buy their groceries from supermarkets – and every supermarket has a fruit and veg aisle. “Good, healthy food has never been cheaper.” Still, obesity is a major problem across the developed world, said Wendell Steavenson in the FT. What we need is a “clear, reasoned” and coherent approach to the issue. *Ravenous* gives us exactly that.

Lives of the Wives

by Carmela Ciuraru
HarperCollins 336pp £25
The Week Bookshop **£19.99**

According to Carmela Ciuraru, there’s only one thing “worse than marriage”, said Hadley Freeman in The Sunday Times. And that’s “marriage to an author”. Ciuraru’s “brisk and enjoyable book” tells the stories of five 20th century literary couples – Roald Dahl and Patricia Neal; Kingsley Amis and Elizabeth Jane Howard (pictured); Kenneth Tynan and Elaine Dundy; Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge; and Alberto Moravia and Elsa Morante. In the main, it presents a sadly predictable picture of “beleaguered wives” and their domineering husbands. “Gripping, horrific and sometimes even funny”, this is a very enjoyable book, said Charlotte Gordon in The Washington Post. “We hear about addictions, money and sexual proclivities, including Tynan’s obsession with spanking women.” But Ciuraru also has a more serious purpose: returning long “overshadowed” women to “centre stage”.

While there’s plenty of “juicy stuff” in *Lives of the Wives*, it suffers from a fundamental problem, said Rachel Cooke in The Observer. Ciuraru’s literary wives don’t have all that much in common. Howard and Morante were significant writers in their own right; Neal and Dundy were actresses (though both later wrote memoirs). Only Troubridge has “no real claim to fame”, and she wasn’t really a “wife”: she and Radclyffe Hall were a lesbian couple. Nor is it even the case that “all these women were kept down by their men”: Tynan’s wife, the fiery Dundy, “always gave as good as she got”, while Morante’s husband actively encouraged her to write. Yet in the main, the thesis holds true, said Hermione Hoby in The New York Times: most of these men were “selfish” egoists who tried to quash their wives’ ambition. Ciuraru’s book moves beyond the “tittle-tattle”, to show the “variegated and specific tragedies of real people”.

Novel of the week

Romantic Comedy

by Curtis Sittenfeld
Doubleday 320pp £16.99
The Week Bookshop **£13.99**

Curtis Sittenfeld’s enjoyable new novel is a “love letter to the prototypical romcom”, said Scaachi Koul in The New York Times. Sally Milz, a comedy sketch-writer in her late 30s, has become “embittered by her life’s many little heartbreaks”, and doubts she will ever find love. On the show she works on (which resembles *Saturday Night Live*), “mediocre-looking” male colleagues seem able to “date way out of their league” – while the women remain single. But when an “ageing pop icon” named Noah hosts the show one week, Sally suddenly finds her heart “aflutter”. The novel becomes an exploration of whether “someone like *her*” (fun and intelligent, but not especially glamorous) can “bag someone like *him*”.

Sittenfeld’s “command of structure, pace and dialogue is faultless”, said Anthony Cummins in The Observer. This book treads “well-tilled terrain” – Covid-19, modern celebrity, the art of writing – but it does so with “panache”. An “affable and intelligently crafted tale of work and love”, this is a novel that’s refreshingly unafraid to give readers “what they want”.

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Drama & Music

Theatre: Agreement

Lyric Theatre, Belfast (028-9592 2672). Until 22 April   Running time: 1hr 45mins ★★★★★

Lee (as Adams) and Gordon (as Hume): a first-rate cast

© CARRIE DAVENPORT

A drama about the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement – 25 years ago this month – might sound a dry affair. But Owen McCafferty's "searing" new play is anything but that, said Jane Coyle in The Irish Times. *Agreement* is a "compelling political thriller with echoes of Greek drama", in which the playwright "peels away interlocking layers of compromise, dislike and distrust to reveal a fraught, painstaking journey towards an acceptable solution to a stubbornly intractable problem". Featuring as characters all the main players – John Hume, David Trimble, Gerry Adams, Bertie Ahern, George Mitchell, Tony Blair and Mo Mowlam – the play unfolds in a circular space, with a single round window to the sky, that becomes a "goldfish bowl of feverish political manoeuvring".

If you think you might get lost in the finer points of what was at stake during the negotiations, fear not: "Mo Mowlam will helpfully turn to the audience and explain them", said Dominic Maxwell in The Times. McCafferty clearly realised that covering the complexities of the three days of talks would be impossible. So his "bustling yet lucid" play rejects "conventional storytelling" and instead "embraces bittiness". Characters stand at the front of the stage and introduce themselves. Scenes are mostly "secluded tête-à-têtes", including a "memorable chat between Adams and Trimble at the urinals". And the staging is inventive and unconventional; at one point there's an Ethel Merman-style dance routine. It all adds up to a "vivid" tribute to the power of compromise, "outstandingly well-performed".

This important play has been given a suitably first-rate cast and Charlotte Westenra directs them "superbly", said Jane Hardy in The Irish News. Rufus Wright is "brilliant", and often extremely funny, as Blair. Packy Lee is terrific as Adams, torn between the need to represent his nationalist constituency and his desire to make history. Patrick O'Kane is a "tortured, clever" and notably sweary Trimble. And Dan Gordon captures well the humanity of Hume, the calm voice of moderate nationalism.

The week's other opening

Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead *Touring to Nottingham, Coventry, Salford, then to Europe (complicite.org)*
This "mischievous" adaptation of Olga Tokarczuk's 2009 novel – part crime thriller, part parable – is Complicité "at full throttle", with its blend of "comic ingenuity, sharp physicality and clever technology" (Financial Times).

Albums of the week: three new releases

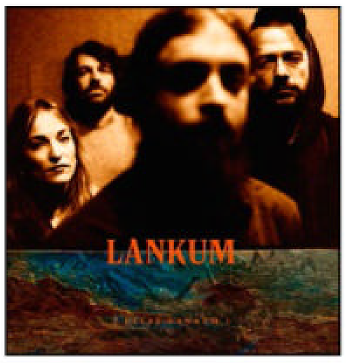
Carl Nielsen: Symphonies Nos. 2 and 6
Deutsche Grammophon
£12

CARL NIELSEN
Symphonies Nos. 2 & 6
DANISH NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
FABIO LUISI

This final instalment of this "marvellous" cycle of the Carl Nielsen symphonies "does not disappoint", said Edward Seckerson in Gramophone. "The Danish National Symphony Orchestra serve their national hero" with "pride and big-heartedness", bringing a conviction to the music that feels "personal to the point of possessiveness". And they are well aided by Fabio Luisi, the Italian at the helm, who seems "instinctively to know where the music goes" and how best to capture its essence.

Indeed, in both the symphonies on this album, the "playing and the clarity of the recordings offer fresh revelations", said Dan Cairns in The Sunday Times. Listening to it, you feel "as if you are discovering the Dane for the first time or being reminded anew of his significance". Luisi and his orchestra are "skittish but precise" in the *Sixth*'s Humoreske, with its "martial drums, pocking wind and rasping, flatulent brass", while in the *Second*'s shattering andante they are "majestic but nuanced". The entire "magnificent" six-symphony cycle is being released as a three-CD set later this month.

Lankum: False Lankum
Rough Trade
£11



Lankum's previous album, 2019's *The Livelong Day*, married Irish folk with the "most desolate blues" to win the Choice Music Prize, Ireland's equivalent of the Mercury Prize, said Ludovic Hunter-Tilney in the FT. Now the Dublin band are back with a similarly impressive record, which gives tales of bloodshed and betrayal a "tumultuous intensity reminiscent of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds".

Yes, there is a "gothic intensity" here, said Jude Rogers in The Guardian – but also songs of "exquisite softness and deeply affecting harmony". Lead singer Radie Peat is to my mind the "best folk singer of our times": she sounds "both like an uncompromising everywoman and a mystical instrument of bellows and reeds – a magic she employs to spiritual effect on the 17th century ballad *Newcastle*". The band alternately lulls the listener with "iridescent bliss", then casts them "into storms of shuddering sounds". This is a bunch of radicals "reaching out to the mainstream – while giving off the thrilling sense that there is so much more to come".

Babymetal: The Other One
Cooking Vinyl
£11

THE OTHER ONE

The Japanese band Babymetal started life in 2010 as a "manufactured combination of *kawaii* (cute) culture and pummelling metal onslaught", said Will Hodgkinson in The Times. Their latest offering is a "concept album of sorts" about a parallel world (the "Metalverse") that supposedly spawned the band, now made up of two women who go by the names Su-metal and Moametal. But you don't need to know the backstory to "enjoy the magic of rock within". This is ultra-fast thrash, complete with guitar solos that are "fiddly to the point of absurd" and "sort-of sweet, sort-of scary vocals". Possibly the whole project is an arty joke – but it's "exciting, brilliantly executed and great fun".

It's "hard not to have fun" when every track feels like an "adventure", agreed Emma Wilkes in Kerrang! *Time Wave*, for example, throws a Technicolour chorus and 1980s synthesised wizardry into the mix, while another track, *Light and Darkness*, "gleefully mashes together a metallic chug with a glittery pop refrain that could run away with the Eurovision title if Japan were ever to compete" in that contest.

Stars reflect the overall quality of reviews and our own independent assessment (5 stars=don't miss; 1 star=don't bother)

Film

The Night of the 12th

1hr 55mins (15)

Gripping and thoughtful police procedural

★★★★

The police procedural may be overdone, but at its best, the genre can "grip no like other", said Hilary White in The Independent (Dublin). This French film, based on a real-life crime, is a case in point. It begins with the brutal killing of a teenage girl in a suburb of Grenoble – an event that coincides with a young, conscientious detective being promoted to lead the local murder squad. Yohan (Bastien Bouillon) and his jaded older partner Marceau (Bouli Lanners) set about investigating the string of men the victim had been involved with – but as one promising lead after another comes to nothing, the case burrows ever deeper under Yohan's skin. What he comes to feel above all is that this is a world in which "something is amiss between men and women".

The misogyny exhibited by all the suspects – and occasionally by the police – is a big part of this "dangling whodunit", said Helen O'Hara in Empire. We're told at the start that the crime remains unsolved, so it's a measure of director Dominik Moll's skill that the film "fascinates more than it frustrates", and remains an edge-of-seat ride. He has produced a "taut and piercing" film that explores a man's world, agreed Jordan Mintzer in Hollywood Reporter. There's only one female detective (Mouna Soualem) and much is made of the cops' macho camaraderie. But it also shows their "glowering vulnerability". The insights into the detectives' inner lives are as enthralling as the investigation itself, said Peter Bradshaw in The Guardian: "What does it do to a cop's soul not only to be confronted with the brutalities of crime, but also with the void, with the absence of an explanation?" It all adds up to a "mysterious and unnerving" drama.

Infinity Pool

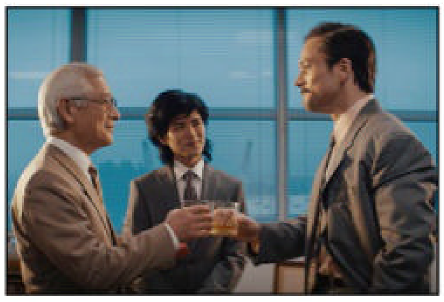
1hr 57mins (18)

Luridly enjoyable horror film set on a holiday resort for the super-rich

★★★

Luxury holidays don't come any grislier than the one depicted in Brandon (son of David) Cronenburg's morbidly funny, "luridly enjoyable" horror film, said Geoffrey Macnab in The Independent. Novelist James (Alexander Skarsgård) and his wife Em (Cleopatra Coleman) are staying in a hotel resort in a corrupt tropical country, when they are befriended by another couple – flirtatious Gabi (Mia Goth) and her shifty husband Alban (Jalil Lespert). One night, as they all venture outside the heavily fortified hotel complex, James runs over and kills a farmer, and discovers how the country deals with foreign miscreants: they are killed by their victims' families, unless (if they can afford it) they pay to create a clone, and effectively watch themselves die.

With the killing of his clone, James has a terrible realisation, said Lou Thomas on NME: he can get away with anything, because if he's caught, he can simply pay for another clone. This is what Gabi and her friends have been doing – and soon he's joining them in an orgy of excess of all sorts, including murder. We've been inundated lately with satires about the awfulness of the mega-rich, but if they're all as good as this, long may the trend continue. This is a tale of doppelganger paranoia told with "stylish cinematic relish", said Mark Kermode in The Observer. But what really drives it is Goth's anarchic energy in a role that "positively fizzes with playfully dangerous pizzazz". Skarsgård turns in a fine performance too, as a man watching his soul being sucked out of him, said Adam Sweeting on The Arts Desk. It is too long, and the sex scenes can spill into gross-out territory, but *Infinity Pool* is a film that lingers "malevolently" in the mind.



Tetris

1hr 58mins (15)

Surprising thriller about the birth of a video game

★★★

This "stranger-than-fiction" film about how the addictive video game *Tetris* found its way out of Russia in the 1980s, and fuelled a global entertainment boom, has all the elements of a Cold War thriller, said Alistair Harkness in The Scotsman. Taron Egerton plays Henk Rogers, a Dutch-born gaming entrepreneur based in Tokyo who resolves to buy the licence for the game. Beset by various bureaucratic obstacles, he sets off to meet its designer in the USSR, only to come up against some formidable rivals, including the media mogul Robert Maxwell (Roger Allam). Director Jon S. Baird fills this side of the story with "le Carré-esque" flourishes involving KGB agents, blackmail plots and brutal violence, to create a film that is both entertaining and surprising, as it touches on the collapse both of Maxwell's empire and of the Soviet Union.

A bit like the game itself, *Tetris* is "clever, crafty and shockingly entertaining", said Jeannette Catsoulis in The New York Times. In a script full of "head-spinning" double-crosses, communism is pitted against capitalism and individual passion against corporate greed. Allam is as good as ever, while Egerton exudes "bushy-tailed zeal"; there's also a weaselly turn by Toby Jones as software executive Robert Stein. At times, the script threatens to get bogged down in legal detail, said Kevin Maher in The Times. But Baird directs his "nutty historical caper" with a go-for-broke abandon that brings the key themes together in "one giddy, pulse-quickening rush". The film is deeply silly in parts, and needlessly convoluted, but it's lots of fun.

Blue Lights: the BBC's cracking new cop drama set in Belfast

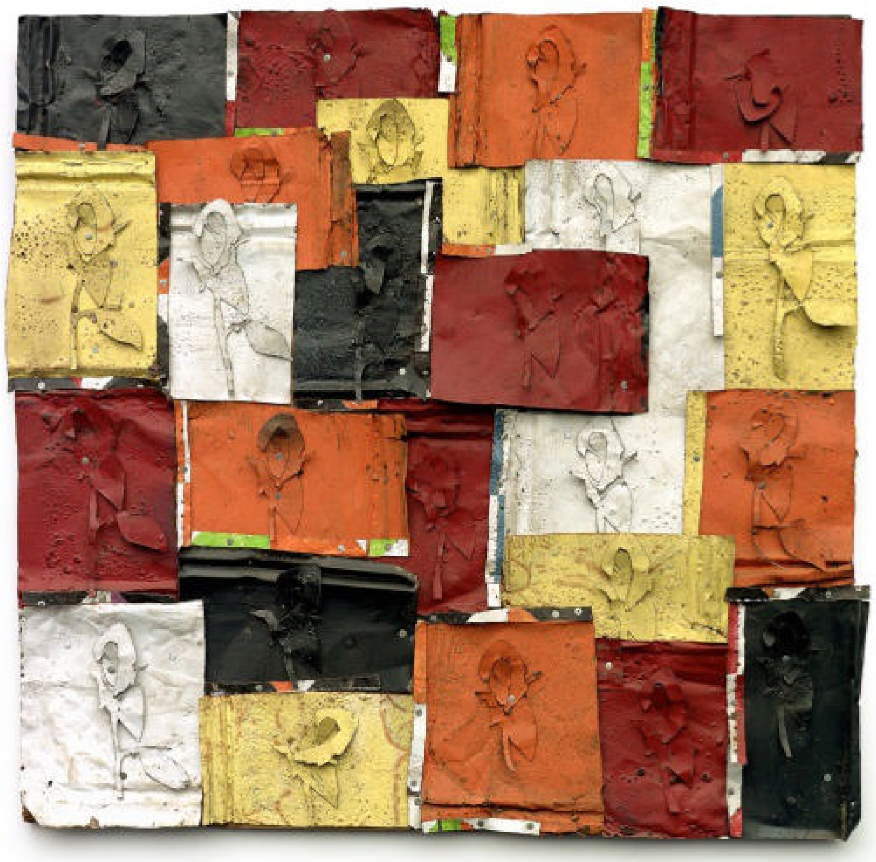
Sian Brooke as Grace

I wouldn't blame anyone who felt they had seen more than enough cop dramas on British TV, said Anita Singh in The Daily Telegraph – but the BBC's latest six-part thriller is a cracker. Written by Declan Lawn and Adam Patterson, who brought us *The Salisbury Poisonings*, *Blue Lights* doesn't have "a duff line or an overcooked scene". The drama centres on three rookie constables in Belfast negotiating their more experienced colleagues on one side, the city's criminals on the other, and dodgy intelligence officers in between. There are shocking incidents involving sectarian and drugs violence, but it isn't relentlessly dark or political.

This cleverly observed drama has a "fresh, irreverent quality" and a wealth of well-drawn characters, agreed Carol Midgley in The Times. It doesn't downplay the violent resistance to the police in Belfast, but the bleakness is not allowed to override the humanity. The premise, of three greenhorns thrown into a fraught and dangerous environment, almost guarantees excitement, said Rebecca Nicholson in The Guardian. Unlike their experienced colleagues, the rookies don't know which battles are not worth fighting – particularly Grace (Sian Brooke), an idealistic ex-social worker. Meanwhile, the earnest Tommy (Nathan Braniff) struggles to project authority, and the hard-partying Annie (Katherine Devlin) has to lie to her friends about her job. There are many tantalising threads: "What's real, and what is a setup? What counts as courage, and what is plain stupidity?" It's well-crafted, and often thrilling.

Exhibition of the week **Souls Grown Deep Like the Rivers**

Royal Academy, London W1 (020-7300 8090, royalacademy.org). Until 18 June



Sarah Lockett's Roses (1997): Ronald Lockett's "reclamatory" work

It took both ingenuity and courage for African Americans to become artists in the Jim Crow-era Deep South, said Maya Jaggi in the FT. The region's black inhabitants typically received no education beyond primary level and were limited to low-paid jobs, making materials like oil paint all but unaffordable. Since museums and galleries were "barred" to them, they had no conventional spaces in which to exhibit. Such was the level of prejudice, the very act of making art as an African American, let alone calling oneself an artist, might inspire "violent reprisals". Nevertheless, as this new exhibition attests, some brave souls persevered to create a "powerful" artistic tradition. Titled after a line from a poem by Langston Hughes, *Souls Grown Deep Like the Rivers* explores the work of 34 black artists born in the Deep South between 1887 and 1965, none of whom had any formal training. The show features 64 works, many of which were created with whatever materials came to hand – from twigs and scrap metal to coffee grounds and even mud. The result is a display of "reclamatory and redemptive" exhibits that speaks loudly of "art's role in collective survival".

There are no "banal formal constraints" here, said Laura Cumming in The Observer. "Carvings become installations"; "sculptures become paintings that burst into three dimensions". By and large, "the material is the message": Joe Minter's sculpture of Christ and the two thieves on Calvary is made from "industrial steel brackets" with "garage nails driven straight through them to welded iron crosses". Bessie Harvey turns a "single tree root" into "a vision of black faces as they might look to white oppressors". We see a map of Africa made in 1960s Alabama, painted from "blackberry juice and grass stain". What a shame, then, that this magnificent display is "crammed" into three small galleries.

Not everything here is "great art", said Waldemar Januszczak in The Sunday Times. Indeed, some of it – such as a 1994 sculpture by Thornton Dial made of "wood, old tyres, bits of wire, and plastic air-fresheners" – is "clumsy". But to condemn this show on those terms is to miss the point: this is art that testifies to ingenuity in the face of grinding poverty and extreme prejudice. Dial's *King of the Jungle*, for instance, is a lion "bashed out and welded from prison chains". Loretta Pettway, a member of the Gee's Bend collective of quiltmakers in Alabama, was married to a spendthrift "ne'er-do-well", and devoted herself to knitting brilliantly patterned quilts for her children, using "worn-out fragments of family clothes". An example here, from 1960, is unbearably poignant. Many of these artworks remind us that "you can take away almost everything from a human being – their freedom, their dignity, their happiness – but you can't take away their creativity".

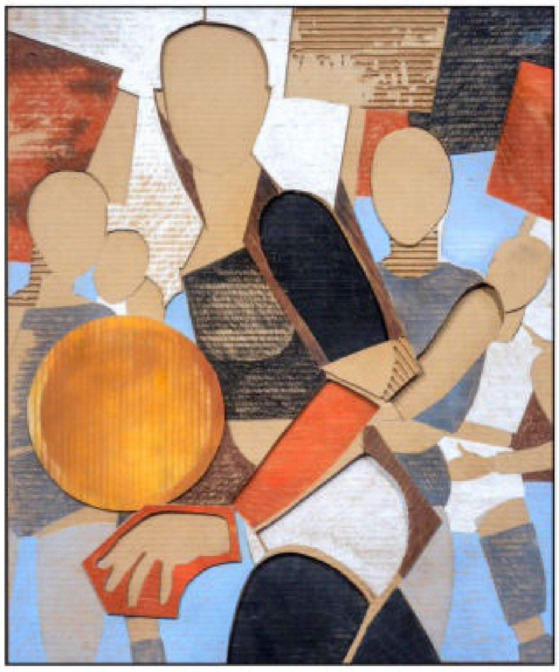
Where to buy...

The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

Jann Haworth

at Gazelli Art House

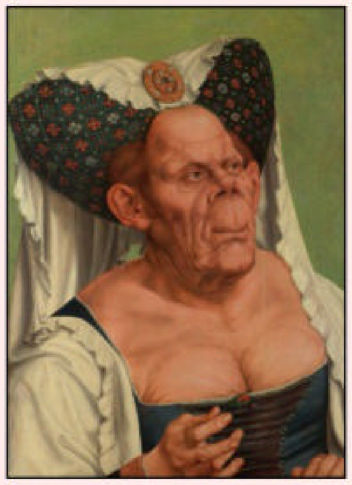
Born in California but based in London since 1961, Jann Haworth was an instrumental figure in early British pop art, blurring the boundary between fine and decorative arts and even co-designing the sleeve for the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's* album – perhaps the movement's most emblematic work. This solo show, *Out of the Rectangle*, pairs recent works with a handful of pieces from the 1960s, and shows that Haworth's energy has not dulled an iota. *Mannequin Defector* (2022) places textile braids and bright fabrics onto a grey seamstress's dummy. It's a contemporary counterpoint to her 1962 "soft sculpture" *Old Lady* (also here), a faintly disturbing life-sized effigy of an old woman slumped in a chair. Cardboard collages of women's bodies continue the theme of the mannequin, often with feminist undertones. Some works are more immediate than others, but the likes of *March: February & March* (2017), which could depict either a tennis match or a street protest, are truly thrilling. Prices on request.



March: March (2017): 105.4cm x 72.4cm

39 Dover Street, London W1
(020-7491 8816). Until 13 May.

The Ugly Duchess



"There's a hairy wart on her cheek." Her nostrils flare horribly. Her ears stick out, like her wrinkled bosom. It cannot be denied that *The Ugly Duchess*, depicted by the 16th century artist Quinten Massys (1465/66-1530), is an eyesore, says Waldemar Januszczak in The Sunday Times. "The question is: why?" A small free exhibition in the National Gallery looks again at one of its best-known faces, which was inspired by Leonardo's grotesques and, in turn, inspired John Tenniel's illustrations of the mad duchess in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Most surprisingly, it reveals that the duchess is part of a pair – and she is reunited with her counterpart, *Portrait of an Old Man*. Together they appear to be part of a satirical subversion of the traditional marriage portrait, though he is not as ugly or as caricatured as the duchess. We never get a clear answer as to what Massys was up to, but this is a fascinating investigation into "top-drawer Renaissance misogyny".

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Best books... Albert Read

The managing director of Condé Nast Britain and former journalist chooses his favourite books. The Imagination Muscle *(Constable £20), his new book about creativity and artistic imagination, is out now*

Nabokov's Dozen by Vladimir Nabokov, 1958 (Penguin £9.99). These stories first showed me what Nabokov's prose could do: dazzle with precise, intricate, playful language summoning character, image and luminous cascades of memory.

The Goldfinch by Donna Tartt, 2013 (Abacus £10.99). Theodore Decker survives a terrorist attack that kills his mother at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and, staggering through the debris, he takes with him her favourite work. Tartt says her writing takes a long time because it is like "painting a wall-size mural with an eyelash" – so intricate is the detail. I can't think of many contemporary novels that combine such narrative grandeur, pace and beauty.

Buddenbrooks by Thomas Mann, 1901 (Vintage £12.99). I reread this book every ten years or so – an imperfect recall allowing me to find fresh delight in this tale of the downfall of a 19th century Hanseatic merchant family, set in an unnamed Lübeck.

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy, 1997 (HarperCollins £9.99). Roy's first novel won the Booker Prize and had a powerful effect on me when I first read it. The story of the Ipe family, and twins Estha and Rahel, is told in flashbacks and asides, and takes you into an evocative Keralan world of pickle factories, coconut trees, the Indian caste system and forbidden love. The texture of the language lingers in the memory, as well as the heartbreak.

Orlando by Virginia Woolf, 1928 (Vintage £7.99). An Elizabethan nobleman glides through time and space to become a 20th century woman – Woolf's gender-fluid mock biography feels contemporary, but was actually published nearly 100 years ago. *Orlando*, like its protagonist, is out to have riotous fun. It's a love letter to Vita Sackville-West of course – and the magical capabilities of the imagination.

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The Week's guide to what's worth seeing

Showing now

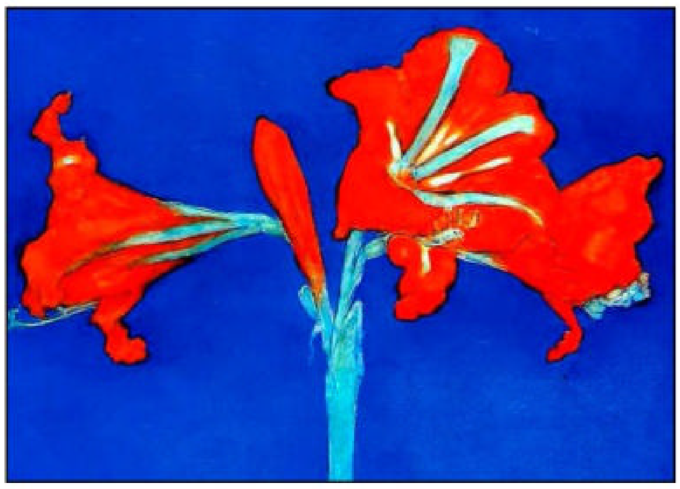
She won plaudits for her performance as Shakespeare's Richard II in 2019; now Adjoa Andoh takes on the title role in a new production of **Richard III**. Until 22 April, Everyman Playhouse, Liverpool (everymanplayhouse.com); 26 April-13 May, Rose Theatre, Kingston (rosetheatre.org).

The Secret Life of Bees, the 2001 bestseller about a group of women in 1960s South Carolina, has been turned into a musical by a Tony- and Pulitzer-winning team. Until 27 May, Almeida Theatre, London N1 (almeida.co.uk).

An "accomplished and engaging" exhibition, **Milk** traces the complex historical and political issues underpinning the humble pint (Evening Standard). Exhibits include old advertising posters and special commissions. Until 10 September, The Wellcome Collection, London NW1 (wellcomecollection.org).

Book now

Hilma af Klint & Piet Mondrian: Forms of Life explores the work of the two painters – she a Swedish abstract artist and mystic, he the revered Dutch modernist – tracing themes common to both. 20 April-3 September, Tate Modern, London SE1 (tate.org.uk).



Detail from Mondrian's Red Amaryllis (1909-10)

Events at the **Charleston Festival** usually sell out fast thanks to its charming setting and starry line-ups. This year's includes a lecture by Baroness Kennedy, and Simon Russell Beale reading W.H. Auden. 17-29 May, Charleston House, Lewes, West Sussex (charleston.org.uk).

The Archers: what happened last week

On a day out with Helen and Lee, Tom and Natasha reveal that the twins have been offered a lucrative modelling job for an agrochemical company – they're turning it down, to Helen's relief. Brian moves into his new home, telling Alice he'll be fine on his own. By way of apology, Jim invites David to the pub quiz. Later, Justin asks Jim about his new protest plan for the charging station. Natasha persuades Tom to agree to the modelling job, though it clashes with Bridge Farm's open day; they'll have to lie. Impressed by George's enthusiasm for his college project, Oliver wants to offer him investment money for his birthday. George is upset when his birthday plan falls apart, and admits to Will that friends tease him about his odd family set-up with Emma, Will and Ed. Justin surprises Lilian with a new electric car. At the quiz, David and Jim wonder about Justin's interest in the charging station. Jim discovers that Justin's company Damara is involved. A furious Helen confronts Tom about the modelling job; they argue but he insists they're going ahead.

Television

Programmes

Burt Bacharach: A Tribute from Ronnie Scott's Clive Myrie presents this tribute from the world-famous jazz club, featuring special arrangements of Bacharach's most beloved songs. Sat 8 Apr, BBC2 19:45 (75mins).

Tenebrae: Bach to MacMillan The choral group Tenebrae performs Bach's motets and works by Sir James MacMillan, including a musical setting of lines by Henry Vaughan, composed for the ensemble. Sun 9 Apr, BBC4 20:00 (80mins).

Pompeii: The Discovery with Dan Snow The historian investigates the discovery of the Roman archaeological site, and the scramble that ensued to uncover (and plunder) its riches. Sun 9 Apr, C5 21:00 (90mins).

Why Didn't They Ask Evans? New adaptation of Agatha Christie's 1934 crime mystery, written and directed by Hugh Laurie. Sun 9, Mon 10 and Tue 11 Apr, ITV1 21:00 (75mins each).

Films

Easter Parade (1948) In Irving Berlin's evergreen musical, a Broadway dancer (Fred Astaire) sets out to make a star out of a lowly chorus girl (Judy Garland). Sun 9 Apr, BBC2 12:00 (100mins).

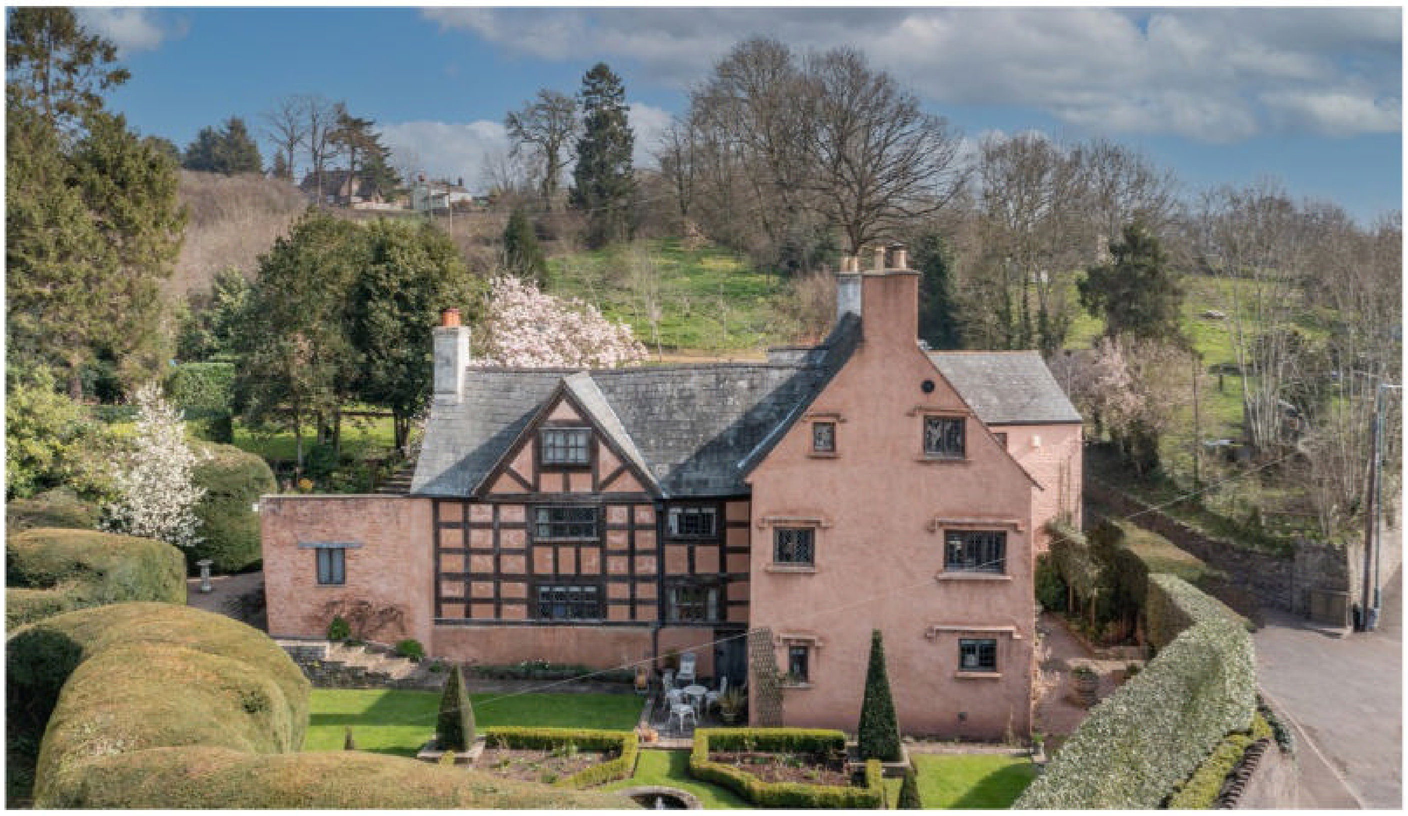
Blade Runner 2049 (2017) Ryan Gosling stars, with Harrison Ford reprising his original role, in this epic sequel. Sun 9 Apr, BBC1 23:20 (150mins).

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969) Robert Redford and Paul Newman star as the dashing outlaws who go on the run after a bank robbery. Thur 13 Apr, BBC4 21:00 (105mins).

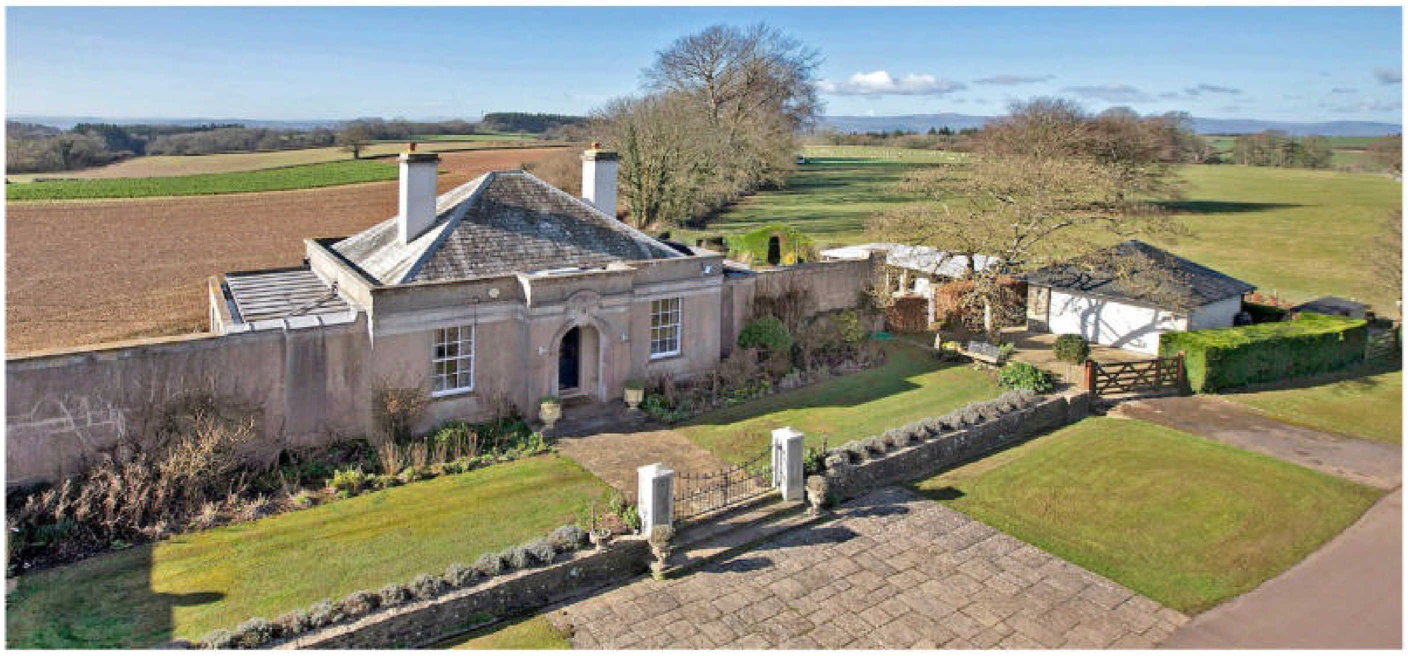
Coming up for auction

Christie's has enlisted the help of designers Jane Schulak and David Stark for its biannual decorative arts sale, **The Collector**, which will see more than 600 lots up for auction in three cities. Highlights can be seen in the London showroom before going under the hammer on 18 April. 11-18 April, Christie's, 8 King Street, London SW1 (christies.com).

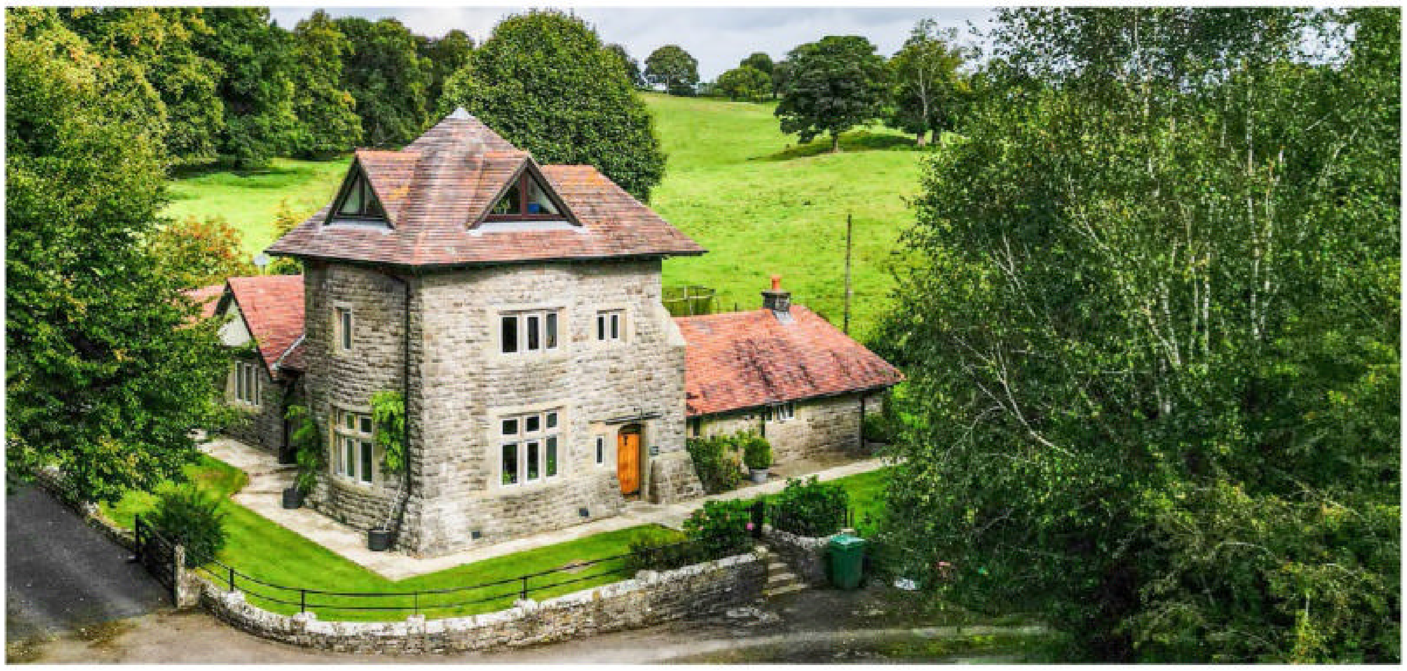
Quirky and unusual properties



▲ **Norfolk:** Swan House, Blakeney. A former coaching inn with Tudor origins believed to be the oldest surviving house in Blakeney. 5 beds, 2 baths, kitchen, dining room, 3 further receps, workshop, garden, parking. OIEO £875,000; Fine & Country (01291-629799).



▲ **Devon:** West Lodge, Lindridge, Bishopsteignton. Standing at the entrance of Lindridge Park, the property was built for Lord Cable c.1920. Main suite, 2 further beds (1 en suite), open-plan kitchen/dining/living room, garden, parking. £800,000; Wilkinson Grant & Co (01392-427500).



▲ **Cumbria:** Tower Lodge, Woodhall. This imposing period stone house has an array of character features including a sandstone spiral staircase, stone mullioned windows and its original front door. 4 beds, family bath, kitchen/dining room, recep, garden, parking. £550,000; PFK (01900-826205).

◀ **East Sussex:** Heavers Mill, Framfield. A converted Grade II water mill in a tranquil and rural setting next to a waterfall and mill pond. The garden features a private riverside sauna. 3 beds, family bath, shower room, kitchen, 2 receps, garden, paddocks, garage. £1.375m; Batcheller Monkhouse (01444-453181).

▼ **Lancashire:** Tower House and Lindeth Tower, Carnforth. Two detached properties including an elaborate Victorian folly with self-contained 1-bed accommodation and 360° degree views. Main house: 3 beds, family bath, shower room, kitchen, 3 receps, garden. £895,000; Fine & Country (01524-380560).

◀ **Gloucestershire:** Northwick Park, Blockley. A William and Mary 17th century Grade II Orangery situated in 35 acres of communal landscaped grounds. The property boasts a "showpiece" 56-foot drawing room. Main suite, 3 further beds (1 en suite), kitchen/dining room with vaulted ceiling, recep, W.C., garden, swimming pool, tennis court, garage. £1.5m; Hayman-Joyce (01608-651188).

◀ **Wiltshire:** The Hexagon, Wardour Castle, Tisbury, Salisbury. A hexagonal house built around 1770 with a wealth of period features, including a stone Temple House. Main suite, 1 further suite, kitchen/breakfast room, 2 receps. £1.3m; Savills (01722-426820).

▲ **Hertfordshire:** Lot Mead Lock, Croxley Green. A former lock keeper's cottage dating back to the mid-1850s. Main suite, 2 further beds, family bath, kitchen/dining room, 2 receps, garden. £1.675m; Savills (01923-725501).

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Food & Drink

What the experts recommend

Beckford Canteen *11-12 Bartlett Street, Bath (01225-338470)*
The menu at this new restaurant in Bath is not one that needs to be "cogitated over" for hours, says Grace Dent in The Guardian. On the contrary, it "demands to be gobbled up". The latest addition to the Beckford Group – which owns several popular pubs and restaurants in the west of England – it is housed in a former Georgian greenhouse and specialises in modern British classics. My friend and I "snuck in at 6.30pm" – the place was booked out – and started our meal with rye old-fashioneds accompanied by "hunks of oozy rarebit titivated with pickled onion". "Good sardines" arrived on toast; there was "luxurious and balm-like" chestnut soup; and another starter of leek and smoked eel was topped with a "perfectly wobbly" egg yolk. Even better was my main course of monkfish, served with silky curried butter and "concertina-style confit potatoes": it's "shaping up to be one of my dishes of 2023". There is nothing fussy about Beckford Canteen – it's just a "charming place where the food is dead good". *From about £55 per head, plus drinks and service.*

Jacuzzi: a real "pick-me-up"

Jacuzzi *94 Kensington High Street, London W8 (bigmammagroup.com)*
Jacuzzi, in west London, is "no mere restaurant", says Tom Parker Bowles in the Daily Mail. Rather, it's a "place where Pasolini meets Pizza Express" – where you feel as though you're "playing a bit part in some crazed Dolce & Gabbana fever dream". That isn't surprising, because it's the latest venture from the Big Mamma group, owners of such "gloriously OTT" restaurants as Gloria and Ave Mario. Here, the "floors are extravagantly tiled", jazz purrs from hidden speakers, and the lighting is "not so much soft as downright crepuscular". But cut through the camp, and there's real quality to be found in the cooking. Culatello di Zibello (cured pork) is "excellent", the slices "paper-thin" and "sweetly piggy". A "vast" T-bone Fiorentina steak could easily feed four, and "I'd happily come back" for the pizza alone. "Prudes and purists" may disapprove of Jacuzzi – but the place is a real "pick-me-up". *About £40 a head.*

Crisp Pizza W6 *The Chancellors, 25 Crisp Road, London W6 (020-8748 2600)*
If you're apprised of culinary hype, you will probably know that The Chancellors – an "outwardly unremarkable" pub in London's Hammersmith – is home to Crisp Pizza W6, says Jimi Famurewa in the Evening Standard. This "permanent kitchen residency" has become a choice destination for "aficionados of all stripes", who've dubbed the New York-style pizzas "perhaps the best in the capital". I'm not sure that accolade can really be justified – "pizza's pleasures are intensely personal" – but there's no doubting that Carl McCluskey's thin-crust pizzas are works of "urgent, crunching genius". The pepperoni – "a disc of oven-scorched dough, bubbling cheese and cupped coins of pepperoni" – has a "profoundly flavoursome chew". With the Vecna – named after the villain in Netflix's *Stranger Things* – the same pepperoni base is given a "candied sweetness courtesy of dribbled hot honey". You'll probably have to queue to eat these pies – The Chancellors doesn't take bookings – but there's a "honed simplicity" to what McCluskey does that makes his slices worth waiting for. *Meal for two plus drinks about £50.*

Recipe of the week: raspberry ricotta cake

This cake is intended to be on the less-sweet side, says Alison Roman. If you're craving something a bit stickier, a bit sweeter, know that, in lieu of the unsweetened berries, this versatile batter can be baked with one cup of jam or marmalade swirled in. The result will still be very delicious and extremely snackable.

Makes one 23cm cake

Cooking spray, for greasing
220g plain flour 1 tbsp baking powder 1 tsp kosher salt 365g ricotta cheese
275g sugar 3 large eggs ½ tsp vanilla extract grated zest of 1 lemon, lime, grapefruit or orange (optional)
115g unsalted butter, melted 340-450g raspberries or blackberries, fresh or frozen

- Preheat the oven to 180°C. Spray a 23cm round cake tin with cooking spray and line with a round of baking paper.
- In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt.
- In a medium bowl, whisk the ricotta, 220g of the sugar, the eggs, vanilla and citrus zest (if using) until smooth. Whisk or gently fold into the flour mixture until just blended. Fold in the melted butter, followed by half the raspberries, crushing them ever so slightly as you fold – you don't want them to disappear into the batter, just to be distributed evenly to create a nice, streaky look, almost like tie-dye.

- Transfer the batter to the cake tin and scatter the remaining raspberries and 55g sugar over the top. (It might look like a lot of sugar – because it is! But it's necessary, promise.)
- Bake until the cake is golden brown, and a tester or toothpick inserted into the centre comes out clean (55-65 minutes). Let cool for at least 20 minutes before unmoulding.
- ***Eat with:*** a bowl of ricotta (sweetened or unsweetened) on the side (you know you want to).
- ***Do ahead:*** this cake can be baked 3 days ahead, wrapped tightly in plastic and stored at room temperature.

Taken from Sweet Enough: A Baking Book *by Alison Roman, published by Hardie Grant at £28. To buy from The Week Bookshop for £21.99 (incl. p&p), call 020-3176 3835 or visit theweekbookshop.co.uk.*

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Consumer

New cars: what the critics say

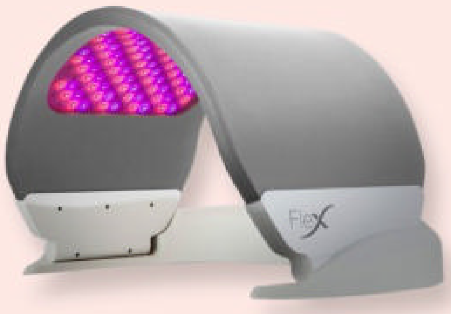
Ferrari Purosangue
Price: from about £313,000

The Daily Telegraph
Ferrari has launched its first four-seat, four-door model. It insists that this is "categorically not an SUV", but "if it walks like an SUV and quacks like an SUV..." The Purosangue – "pure blood" or "thoroughbred" – is a family car. But why would you buy one that is disproportionately heavier, less agile, thirstier and hungrier than the equivalent estate/multipurpose vehicle?"

What Car?
Unlike, say, the Porsche Cayenne, this car isn't built on underpinnings shared with any "more humdrum models". It has a bespoke aluminium structure and the huge engine in the front is "arguably the most spectacular of all engines fitted to tall cars like this". It "drives smoothly through an eight-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox", has four-wheel drive, quick steering and a very controlled ride.

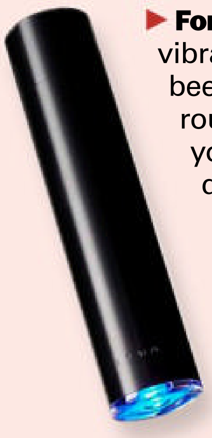
Auto Express
Whatever you call it – an SUV, a sports car, or a hybrid of the two – the Purosangue is certainly a departure for the brand "both in design and its intended audience". The infotainment system is too complex, and the boot isn't as big as you would expect. And once owners add on a few extras, the car is likely to cost north of £400,000, which is "bonkers". Still, "there is nothing else quite like it" on the market.

The best... beauty gadgets



◀ **Dermalux Flex** The Dermalux Flex is a large (and pricey) device that can either be used as a sort of tunnel to slide over your face and neck, or be draped over your body. The at-home version of Dermalux's salon LED treatment, it uses different combinations of lights for healing, collagen production or antibacterial treatments (£1,895; currentbody.com).

▶ **NuFace Mini** For a quick and very portable treatment option, the NuFace Mini uses microcurrents to tone and lift the face (as with the Caci non-surgical facelifts that are available in salons). It cuts out after five minutes, and comes with an aqua gel, a silk crème and a "clean sweep" brush (£311; net-a-porter.com).



▶ **Foreo Luna Play Smart 2** Foreo's vibrating facial cleansing devices have been a mainstay of the beauty gadget round-ups for a few years. Just apply your cleanser and it will "shake the dirt" from your pores (available in four colours, £99; cultbeauty.co.uk).

▼ **ZIIP** Created by a facialist who treats the likes of Jennifer Aniston, the ZIIP uses electrical currents of differing levels to target different things. Nanocurrents are meant to improve collagen and elastin production, while others manipulate muscles or target bacteria during breakouts (£425; currentbody.com).

◀ **Lyma Laser** If you really want to splash out, the Lyma Laser apparently holds the strongest at-home laser on the market. It promises to improve the appearance of scars and pigmentation. It also claims to penetrate layers of skin and fat to hit ageing cells and make them produce collagen again (£1,999; lyma.life).

SOURCE: THE TIMES

How to... clear out your wardrobe

- Separate your clothes into the garments you don't wear (including the ones that you have never really worn but still think you one day might); the pieces that you regularly wear; and the ones you don't wear often but need to keep for special occasions.
- Using vacuum-pack bags or similar, pack away seasonal or occasional wear; this will free up space so you can actually see what you own and wear more of it.
- Be decisive, and discard the items that you don't wear, and that are not special – but before you chuck them out, consider why you don't wear them. Perhaps it is something as simple as a broken zip? In which case, get them mended.
- Try using The Seam, an app that links people with jobs that need doing to local tailors, cobblers and other specialists.
- To save money and avoid overfilling your wardrobe, consider renting clothes for special occasions on the peer-to-peer fashion rental platform By Rotation.

SOURCE: EVENING STANDARD

And for those who have everything...

For when you need to dry just one item of clothing, or for drying items while you're travelling, there is the lightweight Aerative Portable Dryer – a collapsible hanger that distributes warm air via its rotatable arms.
£69; aerative.com

SOURCE: THE INDEPENDENT

Where to find... good farmers' markets

With net-fresh crab, Cornish sea salt made in traditional clay pots and free-range bronze turkeys on offer, **Truro Farmers' Market** fits right in alongside the area's renowned restaurants (Wednesdays and Saturdays, 9am-4pm; trurofarmers.co.uk).

There are sellers from far and wide at **Edinburgh Farmers' Market**. Look out for gin from the Dark Art Distillery in Kirkcudbright, and hot smoked salmon from Arbroath Fisheries (Saturdays, 9am-2pm; edinburghfarmersmarket.co.uk)

Borough Market in London is superb of course, but **Venn Street Market** on Clapham Common is an excellent spot for finding produce by local growers and artisans as well as street food (Saturdays, 10am-3pm; vennstreetmarket.co.uk).

Traders have been coming to the site of **Ashton Farmers' and Producers' Market** in Greater Manchester since the early 1800s. It now has a new craft section (last Sunday of the month, 8am-1pm; ashton-market.co.uk).

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY TIMES

This week's dream: a gastronomic tour of Mexico City

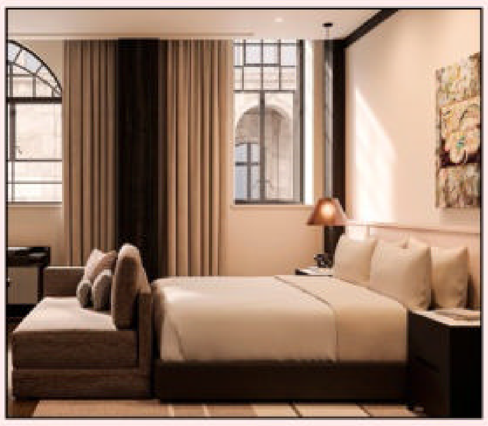
The city has experienced a "culinary explosion"

"Mexico City's global reputation has been on an upswing for some time", and among its greatest glories is its food scene, says Gary Shteyngart in Condé Nast Traveller. It has some of the world's best restaurants – it is on a culinary par with Paris or Bangkok – and in recent years the city's chefs, such as Enrique Olvera (whose Pujol has featured on the World's Best Restaurants list for nearly a decade) have been "recognised on the world stage". But their sophisticated modern gastronomy has deep local roots, and any food tour should take in a wide range of the city's eateries.

You might start at Tacos El Güero, a "brightly lit hole-in-the-wall" where "half the neighbourhood" waits in line each night for the city's best *tacos de suadero*, made with divinely juicy, slow-cooked beef brisket. There's also fabulous street food around the Mercado de San Juan, including quesadillas made with corn fungus. The city's cantinas – part bar, part diner – are another indispensable institution. Among the best are Cantina Tío Pepe – which is little changed since it was patronised by William Burroughs in the 1950s – and El Centenario, also "true literary territory". And the city has breakfast joints with few equals. Try Fonda Margarita, a "family friendly dive beneath a corrugated roof" that serves *chicharrón en salsa verde* "as soft as a newborn's ear"; and El Cardenal, for the omelette-style cactus leaves and fried ant larvae.

The city's "culinary explosion" started two decades ago at Contramar, a seafood restaurant that's still going strong. A more recent arrival, La Docena, also offers fabulous seafood, including a good *chilpachole* (spicy crab stew). At Em, many of the dishes "celebrate the Mexican staple of corn" to "revelatory" effect. But if there's anywhere that epitomises the current strength of the city's food scene – its "playful experimentation" with tradition – it is Meroma, where even the simplest chicken dish is brought uniquely to life with "spicy herbs from Tepotzotlán".

Hotel of the week



Capella Sydney *Australia*

Sydney has "a curious dearth of standout hotels" – but this new one from the Singaporean Capella group goes some way to filling the gap, says Maria Shollenbarger in the Financial Times. Occupying a grand baroque Edwardian building that was once home to the city's Department of Education, it is "unassailably polished, without being anodyne". The 192 rooms are spacious, and feature lots of wood, soft leather and linen upholstery. The hotel houses an "impressive", multimillion-dollar art collection, a "showpiece" 20-metre pool, two restaurants offering "delicious" contemporary Australian cuisine, and an excellent concierge service.

Doubles from about £410 b&b; capellahotels.com.

Getting the flavour of...

A wild Caribbean island

With its "exuberantly beautiful" rainforest, towering mountains and natural hot springs, Dominica is the wildest and most rugged of all the Caribbean's small islands, says Chris Haslam in The Sunday Times. There's fabulous (if tough and often muddy) hiking to enjoy, especially on the Waitukubuli Trail, a 14-section, 115-mile path that crosses the island. Alternatively, take to the waves with local guide Wes Moses, who has recently launched the Waitukubuli Sea Trail, a seven-day, 40-mile kayaking adventure along the leeward coast, where the diving is also superb, with accommodation in guesthouses along the way. For a luxurious stay, check in at Secret Bay. This resort's huge clifftop villas feel like "cloudforest-canopy" treehouses, so lush are their surroundings, and the volcanic island's only white-sand beach lies a ten-minute swim away.

Spring hiking in Crete

Spring is the perfect time for a walking holiday in Crete, says Louise Roddon in The Observer, when temperatures are mild and wildflowers are in bloom. Go on a week-long guided break with Simpson Travel, and you'll stay on the fringes of the unspoiled village of Vamos at the Arosmari Village Hotel, which has a fine garden and a huge pool. Mornings are spent in the company of expat Jonathan Peat, who leads a series of fairly easy treks through "dramatic" landscapes, all culminating in "fabulous" al fresco lunches at hidden tavernas. Among the highlights are the ancient paths over the Omalos plateau, where griffon vultures and buzzards circle above craggy cliffs, and the flower-strewn meadows around Megala Chorafia and Aptera, with their Minoan ruins and panoramic sea views. *A week-long trip costs from £1,395pp (simpsontravel.com).*

Dark nights in Northumberland

Phone signals and light pollution both fall away in the Kielder Forest, the most sparsely populated corner of England. Part of the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park, it is a wonderful place in which to contemplate the night sky, says Daniel Stables in The Daily Telegraph. You could stay at the Sky Den, an "eye-catching" treehouse, set beside a rushing river at the heart of the Kielder Forest Park. This remarkable construction has a retractable roof, allowing for "stargazing from under a duvet". There's plenty to do in the area by day, including lovely walks and otter-spotting trips around Bakethin Reservoir, and in the evenings, it's worth attending the awe-inspiring public events at Kielder Observatory, which was built in 2008 to educate visitors about astronomy. *Go to visitnorthumberland.com for more information.*

Last-minute offers from top travel companies

Agadir surf & yoga break
A beachfront setting, a first-rate spa and a great surf club are the calling cards at Paradis Plage Resort in Morocco. 7 nights' b&b from £842pp (incl. flights). 020-3451 2688, tui.co.uk. Depart 22 June.

Charming Corsica stay
Four nights at the Best Western Hotel San Damianu, located between the sea and the mountain in the medieval city of Sartène. From £289pp b&b. 020-8175 1145, loveholidays.com. Arrive 6 July.

South Africa experience
Enjoy safaris, an epic stretch of coastline and local adventures during your 9-day stay, from Johannesburg to Durban. From £918pp b&b. 0808-274 5111, intrepidtravel.com. Arrive 13 May.

Iceland city break
Stay 3 nights at Center Hotels Plaza and take in the Northern Lights as well as a Golden Circle day-trip. From £339pp b&b (incl. Bristol flights). 020-4505 9783, travelodeal.com. Depart 28 November.

Covid-19: please check government websites for testing and quarantine requirements, and the rules surrounding children (gov.uk).

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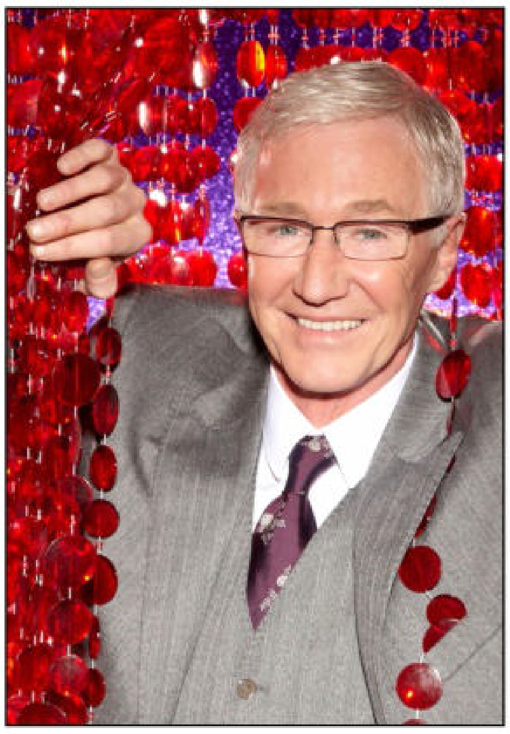
Well-loved TV presenter who found fame as Lily Savage

Paul O'Grady
1955-2023

Paul O'Grady, who has died aged 67, was for many years better known as Lily Savage – a brassy "blonde bombsite" in PVC skirts and scuffed stilettos whom he had created in the gay clubs of north London, to supplement his income as a social worker. Anarchic, acerbic and vulgar, Lily Savage became a hugely popular figure on British television in the 1990s, presenting *Blankety Blank* and other TV shows; then in the 2000s, O'Grady became yet more beloved when he started appearing as himself. He was a warm, compassionate presence on British TV, said The i Paper, but one who retained some of Lily's biting wit. Although he now lived on a farm in Kent, he had not forgotten his working-class roots (at Channel 4, he quietly insisted that any jobs that came up on *Paul O'Grady Live* were advertised at the local job centre); and in 2010, he delivered a furious on-screen rant about the Tory MPs who had "whooped" with delight as each new austerity cut was announced. "Gonna scrap the pensions – yeah! – no more wheelchairs – yeah! ... I bet when they were children they laughed in *Bambi* when his mother got shot."


O'Grady: a biting wit

Paul O'Grady was born into a Catholic family in Birkenhead in 1955, to an Irish father, Paddy, and English mother, Molly (née Savage). As a late arrival to the family (his siblings had been born during the War), he was doted on by his parents. Lily Savage was partly modelled on the many women in his life then, including his Aunt Chrissie, who worked as a bus conductor. "She had a hard life, but she used to suck her cheeks in and fancy herself as Marlene Dietrich," he said. Having failed the 11-plus, he left school at 16 and had various jobs before settling into care work with disabled children. By that time, he needed the money: he'd had a daughter, and had child support to pay. In his 20s, he moved to London, where he was employed as a peripatetic carer by Camden Council, which involved him moving in with deprived families, to avoid the children having to be taken into care. He developed Lily in the 1980s, and she proved such a success that for eight years, she was the headline act at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern cabaret club. O'Grady said that he had not had to "come out" to his family; he'd always been himself. But London during the Aids crisis was a difficult place to be gay. He would recall a notorious occasion in 1986 when the police raided the club in search of evidence of "lewd conduct". It was "pandemonium", he said; the officers were extremely aggressive, and all of them were wearing rubber gloves, in case they touched any gay men. "And of course I said, 'Oh good, have you come to do the washing up?'"

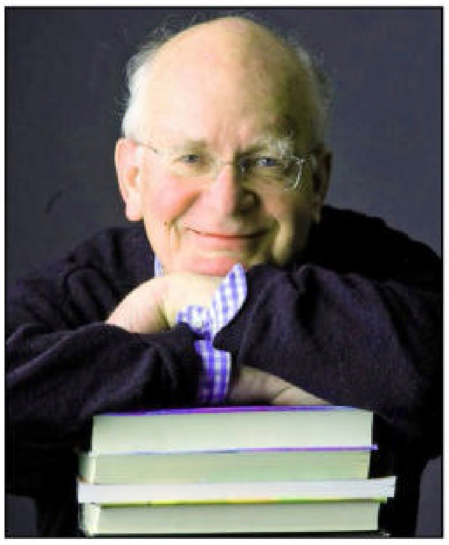
It was after he took his act to the Edinburgh Fringe in 1991, and was nominated for the Perrier Award, that Lily shot to TV stardom, said The Daily Telegraph. Lily appeared on *The Big Breakfast* and hosted several shows of her own. But O'Grady confessed that his alter ego was hard to live with. "I play second fiddle to her all the time," he said. "I sometimes come into my flat, and there's a leopard-skin handbag on the floor, and a pair of her shoes and an old coat – and it's like living with a boozy old barmaid who's trashed the place. I think, 'Slag!'" He started fronting TV shows as himself in the early 2000s, and retired Lily in 2005, following the death from cancer of his long-time partner Brendan Murphy. The following year, he had a heart attack, the second in four years.

Childhood visits to his father's family farm in Ireland had fostered in him a love of animals; he was an ambassador for Battersea Dogs and Cats Home and cared for a menagerie of animals on his smallholding in Kent. He is survived by his husband, Andre Portasio, and by Sharon, his daughter. He'd always resisted calls to bring back Lily, but at the time of his death, he was playing a Lily-like Miss Hannigan in a touring production of *Annie*.

Co-founder of Private Eye who created Usborne books

Peter Usborne
1937-2023

In 1961, Peter Usborne, who has died aged 85, co-founded the satirical magazine Private Eye, said The Daily Telegraph. A decade later, he launched a venture of his own – Usborne, the hugely successful children's book publishing company. The secret of its success, he said, lay in seeing things from a child's point of view, and also in looking at "the dusty corners of children's book publishing that are neglected by people looking for the next J.K. Rowling".


Usborne: the "key man" at the Eye

Peter Usborne was born in London in 1937, and brought up in Surrey. He won a scholarship to Eton, and after national service went up to Balliol College, Oxford, where he founded a humorous magazine called Mesopotamia, with contributors including Richard Ingrams, John Wells and Willie Rushton. After graduating, he went to work in the US, but he could not shake the thought that, having had such fun at Oxford, "we should do Mesopotamia in real life"; and in 1961, he persuaded his Oxford contemporary Andrew Osmond to put up £450 to fund it (and so become the original Lord Gnome). Various people were involved in the founding of Private Eye, but according to the magazine's first editor, Christopher Booker, Usborne was the "key man". "He was the man who said, 'An end to pub talk, let's make it a proposition.'" The first issue appeared on 25 October 1961. For the next few years, "I was managing director, bottlewasher, chief worrier and the man who paid the salaries, but not the editor, so I take no credit for the brilliant editorial content," Usborne told The Sunday Times.

When Osmond's money ran out, Peter Cook came to the rescue; and soon after that, Usborne left to study for an MBA. He then went to work at the British Printing Corporation. One afternoon, his wife telephoned to tell him she was pregnant; "full of excitement", he asked if he could move into children's books, and was sent "down the corridor" to Macdonald Educational, where he devised what became the hugely successful Macdonald Starter books. When his boss asked what he'd like to do next, he said "start my own company". Bankrolled by BPC, Usborne produced its KnowHow books, sticker books, dot-to-dots, and all the rest, which were conceived, written and designed in-house. Usborne said his strategy was simply: Do it better.

Usborne saw his work as an extension to parenthood, and just as he wanted to be a father forever, so he never wanted to retire. "I don't like golf. I have tried sailing and it's not for me," he said. He is survived by Wendy, his second wife, and by a daughter and son from his first marriage.

CITY

Companies in the news

...and how they were assessed

BYD/Tesla: battle royal in China

There's been a change of gears in the cut-throat Chinese car market, said Edward White and Gloria Li in the Financial Times. For the first time this year, Chinese carmakers are "on track to sell more passenger vehicles than foreign rivals" in the world's largest auto market. Leading the field is Warren Buffett's favourite electric carmaker, BYD. In the first two months of the year, the Shenzhen-based group "sold more than five times the number of units than Tesla did" – hot on the heels of reporting "a more than 400% surge" in net profits to $2.4bn in 2022. Analysts reckon that Tesla's attempt to start a price war in China has "backfired". Chinese consumers responded by favouring cheaper, newer models by BYD, whose "vertically integrated structure – from mines to batteries and chips – has given it an advantage" in the transition away from the combustion engine. Buffett's investment company, Berkshire Hathaway, first took a stake in BYD back in 2008. In February, Buffett's right-hand man, Charlie Munger, told Fortune it was one of the best decisions he'd ever made. It's not all bad news for Tesla in China, said Al Root in Barron's: sales in Q1 "likely grew faster than the overall Chinese market". But investors have every reason for concern. "BYD is proving to be a formidable competitor."

Virgin Orbit: back down to Earth

What price a failed satellite launch? Quite a hefty one if you happen to be involved with Virgin Orbit, said Kalyeena Makortoff in The Guardian. The California-based company, founded by Sir Richard Branson, announced last week that it was "slashing 85% of its workforce" after struggling to find new investment . Then on Wednesday, it reported that it had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy following share falls of more than 50%, which had taken total investor losses over six months to 93%. The company's attempt "to launch the first satellite from UK soil" in January bombed when its LauncherOne rocket "failed to reach the required altitude". Virgin Orbit had hoped that some staff would find berths with Orbit's space tourism sister company, Virgin Galactic, but Galactic faces questions of its own, said Ben Marlow in The Daily Telegraph. The turning interest cycle has dramatically slashed the risk appetite for "unproven business models and loss-making start-ups". No one said extraterrestrial exploration would be easy. But Branson's "quest for the final frontier" went so badly that there was "probably more chance of finding Elvis on the Moon" than of "the bearded billionaire firing another rocket into space".

Party pieces: going home time?

Carole Middleton founded Party Pieces in 1987 after apparently looking, and failing, to find, "inspiration" for Kate's fifth birthday party, said Milo Pope in the Daily Mail. It's been a good run for the online company, which majors on selling everything from "treat stands" and decorations, to plates, napkins, cups and hats. But now the Princess of Wales's family has hired Interpath "to advise on strategic directions" – including securing funding from an outside investor or a potential sale. Business has been hit by a combination of Covid lockdowns, Royal Mail strikes and "a dip in customer spending"; last October it revealed a total deficit of £1.35m. Party Pieces expanded into the US last year via a deal with supermarket Saker ShopRite, and was also planning expansion into Europe and the Middle East. This may boost the pool of would-be backers.

Seven days in the Square Mile

The pound rose to its highest level against the US dollar in ten months – boosted by signs of resilience in the UK economy that have fuelled expectations of further interest rate rises. **Sterling** hit $1.252 on Tuesday. Having raised rates to 4.25% in March, the BoE is expected to deliver two more quarter-point rises by September – just as expectations of tighter monetary policy have been dialled back in Europe and the US amid turmoil in the banking sector. In a fresh energy shock, the price of **Brent Crude** jumped above $85 after Opec set out unexpected production cuts.

The **CBI** temporarily postponed all of its public engagements and events following misconduct claims. The business lobby group faces allegations of harassment, cocaine use and rape made by a dozen women who are current or former employees – in addition to separate claims about Tony Danker, who stepped down as director-general last month.

Two of the best-known names in the City, **Rathbones** and **Investec Wealth**, announced merger plans to create a £100bn money manager. Swiss prosecutors opened an investigation into the takeover of **Credit Suisse** by its rival **UBS** in the rescue deal rushed through last month. The troubled cinema chain **Cineworld** halted plans to sell its UK and US operations after striking a deal to exit bankruptcy. **L'Oreal** agreed to buy the Australian high-end cosmetics group **Aesop** for $2.5bn.

Water companies: unlimited penalties in the pipeline

Spring is here and, with it, thoughts of bucolic riverside pursuits. Bad news for water firms, which have been slammed for releasing sewage into England's waterways more than 300,000 times last year and are now under threat of "unlimited fines", said The Times. Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey has announced plans to scrap the £250,000 cap on civil penalties, enabling the Environment Agency to impose those unlimited fines on companies "without going through the courts". The Government plans "to ring-fence" any cash raised into a "water restoration fund" devoted to projects such as improving wildlife habitats.

"Turning rivers into open sewers"

Firms are only permitted to spill from overflow systems "in exceptional circumstances", so clearly they've been pushing their luck, said The Daily Telegraph. The worst offenders last year were London-listed United Utilities (which owns North West Water) and Yorkshire Water (privately held by the Kelda Group). Coffey had previously rejected a suggestion to raise the level of fines, fearing the impact on water firms' "financial resilience". Now she has bowed to pressure from campaigners. "Clean water has become a politically-charged issue" ahead of May's local elections, said The Guardian, with Labour's Keir Starmer accusing the Tories of "turning rivers into open sewers".

Industry executives warn that overly punitive measures "will scare off investors", said Oliver Gill in The Sunday Telegraph. Yet the fact that shareholders have basked in about £66bn in dividends since privatisation in 1989, while the country has been "left with leaky pipes and overflowing drains", has provoked public outrage against the industry. It has now reached "fever pitch". Barclays analysts reckon £100bn is needed "to bring the sector up to scratch". But who will pay? That's the eternal question.

Talking points

Issue of the week: awful April?

Household bills up. Inflation up. But the overall economic picture may not be so gloomy after all

Jeremy Hunt: Budget predictions “confounded”?

An extra £88 a month (£1,000 a year): that’s what millions of us are going to have to start paying this “awful April”, as people are calling it, said George Nixon in The Times. It will come in the form of rising bills for energy, phone, water, broadband and council tax. The Office for Budget Responsibility reckons the squeeze is so intense that, even allowing for the predicted fall in inflation (now at 10.4%), it expects household disposable income to decline 5.7% by 2025, the biggest two-year drop since 1956. The gloomy mood is equally apparent in companies, said the FT. In what has been dubbed “a week of woe”, corporation tax has risen from 19% to 25%, just as most businesses face reduced government subsidies in their energy bills and a 9.7% rise in the living wage. “Tax up, energy bills up, employment costs up, inflation up – but the Government is oblivious and now running out of road to make a difference,” said Craig Beaumont of the Federation of Small Business. Thousands of small companies are in danger.

Fortunately, the economic picture looks rather more nuanced, said Larry Elliott in The Guardian. Not only do official figures show “the UK performed slightly more strongly than originally thought towards the end of 2022”, but businesses are reporting “a spring surge in order books, boosting hopes the economy may finally be recovering after flirting with recession”. An Institute of Directors survey shows “a pick-up in growth across all sectors” – suggesting the economy is on course to “confound predictions” made by Chancellor Jeremy Hunt in the recent Budget that output would fall in Q1 2023. “In spite of efforts to portray the British economy as down and out, it refuses to oblige,” said Alex Brummer in the Daily Mail. It will be fascinating to see if the IMF “revises up its dismal projections” when it issues its spring World Economic Outlook. “It should.”

“Some statistics still have the capacity to shock,” said David Smith in The Sunday Times. One such was the latest reading for “food inflation”, which jumped by 18.2%, year-on-year, in February. That rise, over 12 months, is as much as “the cumulative increase over the previous 11 years”, showing how “off the scale” current rises are. Central bankers tend to look at “core inflation”, which excludes energy and food, and is currently running at 6.2%. But it is overall inflation that matters to people and businesses – “and when it is driven by energy and food, it is painful”. The Government has set a target of halving inflation by the end of the year. If this happens while food inflation remains in double figures, “it will be seen by voters as the most pyrrhic of victories, and a sign that the cost of living crisis is far from over”.

The oil spike: what the experts think

Saudi Aramco: cutting production

- **Surprise move**

Just when you hoped that energy shocks had been consigned to the recent past, along comes another. The price of Brent crude oil surged by 6% to $85/barrel on Monday after Opec’s weekend announcement that Saudi Arabia would be cutting its production by 5%, and that members of the Opec+ cartel would follow with cuts of their own. “The move was rich with political implications,” said Robert Armstrong on FT.com. Analyst Helima Croft of RBC Capital Markets reckons it reflects a new “Saudi-first policy”: the kingdom is sending a message to the US that “it’s no longer a unipolar world” and that Saudi is making “new friends”. Whatever the case, the implications for the West are potentially troubling.

- **Bad news for central banks**

The chief economic worry, said Martin Strydom in The Times, is that a rising oil price “could keep inflation higher for longer than expected” – meaning “central banks will need to continue raising interest rates” just as there were hopes they were “close to peaking”. According to Luke Bosdet of the AA, “the industry’s rule of thumb is that for every $2 change in the value of oil, there is a 1p change at the pump”. If the current jump in oil is sustained, that translates into a 3p-5p increase. But it might not end there, said Alex Brummer in the Daily Mail. Forecasters at Goldman Sachs are predicting that the oil price could reach $110 by the end of the year. “Since gas prices take their lead from oil,” that could mean another “difficult autumn and winter”.

- **Portfolio cue**

There’s a point beyond which the members of Opec don’t want the oil price to fall – and “it seems we’ve reached it”, said John Stepek on Bloomberg. Of course there’s no guarantee that its latest move will push the price a lot higher: forecasters are often wrong and much depends on how global growth impacts the supply/demand equation. “But on balance this makes bad outcomes more likely” – increasing the risk of that 1970s bogey: stagflation. The “silver lining” is that Opec’s move has “put some pep back into the FTSE 100”: shares in the big oil majors have soared. Take it as a cue to “tilt your portfolio towards energy, gold and more inflation-resistant, cash-generative companies”.

Property concerns

House prices The latest snapshot from mortgage provider Nationwide is that UK house prices fell by “their fastest rate since 2009” in the year to March, said Kalyeena Makortoff in The Guardian – dropping 3.1% to £257,122. This marks “the seventh monthly decline in a row” taking prices 4.6% below their recent peak last August – shortly “before the housing market was rocked by Liz Truss’s disastrous mini-Budget”. Nationwide’s chief economist, Robert Gardner, reckons the squeeze on household budgets from high inflation means “it will be hard for the market to regain much momentum in the near term” – particularly as “housing affordability” remains “stretched”.

Commercial property Share prices in London’s big listed property companies have been hit “as the repercussions of the banking crisis that began in California begin to make themselves felt in the UK”, said Tom Howard in The Times. British Land saw its shares drop by 13% in March; shopping centre specialist Hammerson suffered a 14% fall. Overall, the MSCI Europe Real Estate Index is at “its lowest level” since 2009. The pressure on commercial property from rising interest rates is intensifying. Requests from Blackstone clients to withdraw funds from its $70bn real estate income trust, known as Breit, totalled $4.5bn last month, noted Gordon Smith on FT.com, forcing the fund manager to limit redemptions for “the fifth straight month”.

0.94
0.51
0.74
0.66

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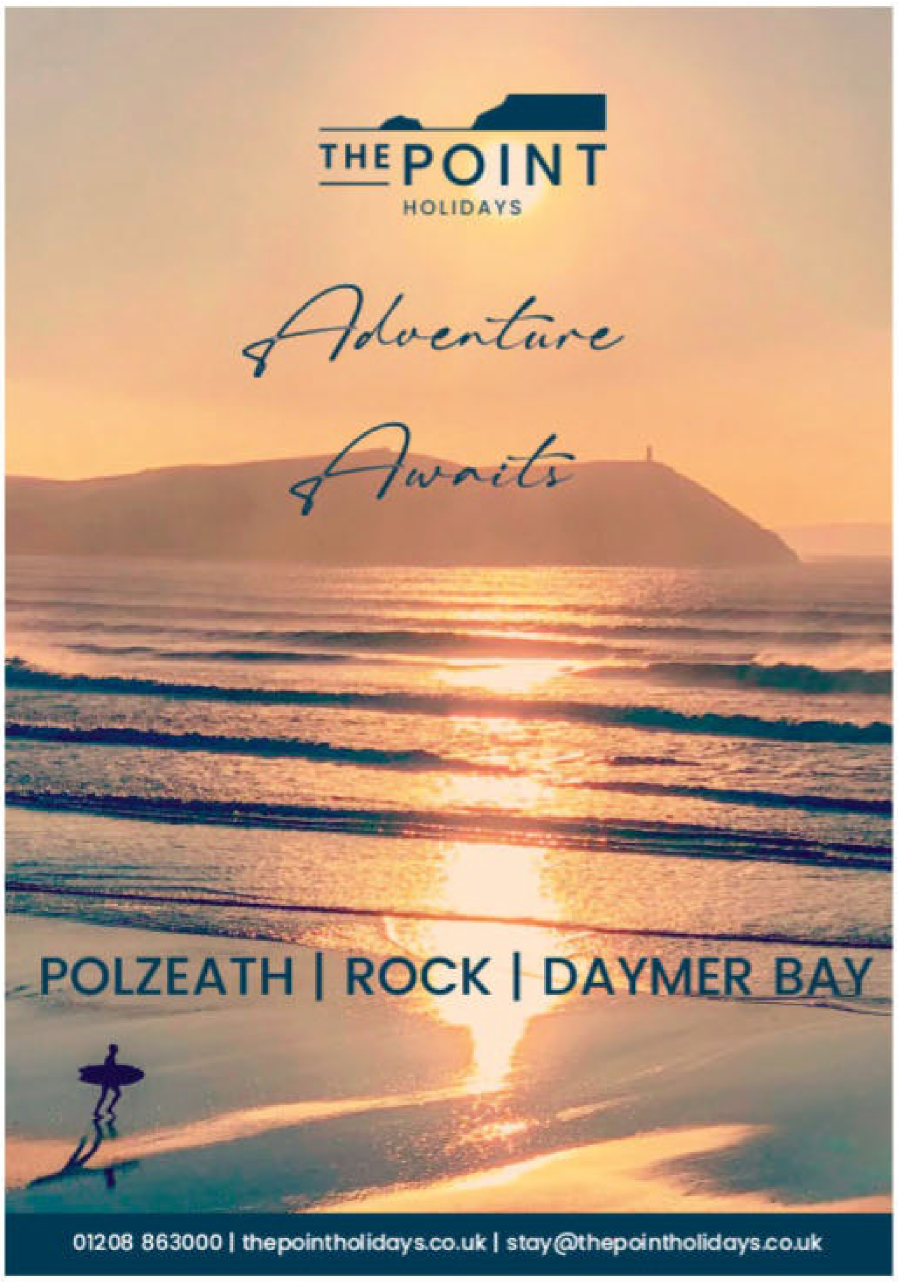

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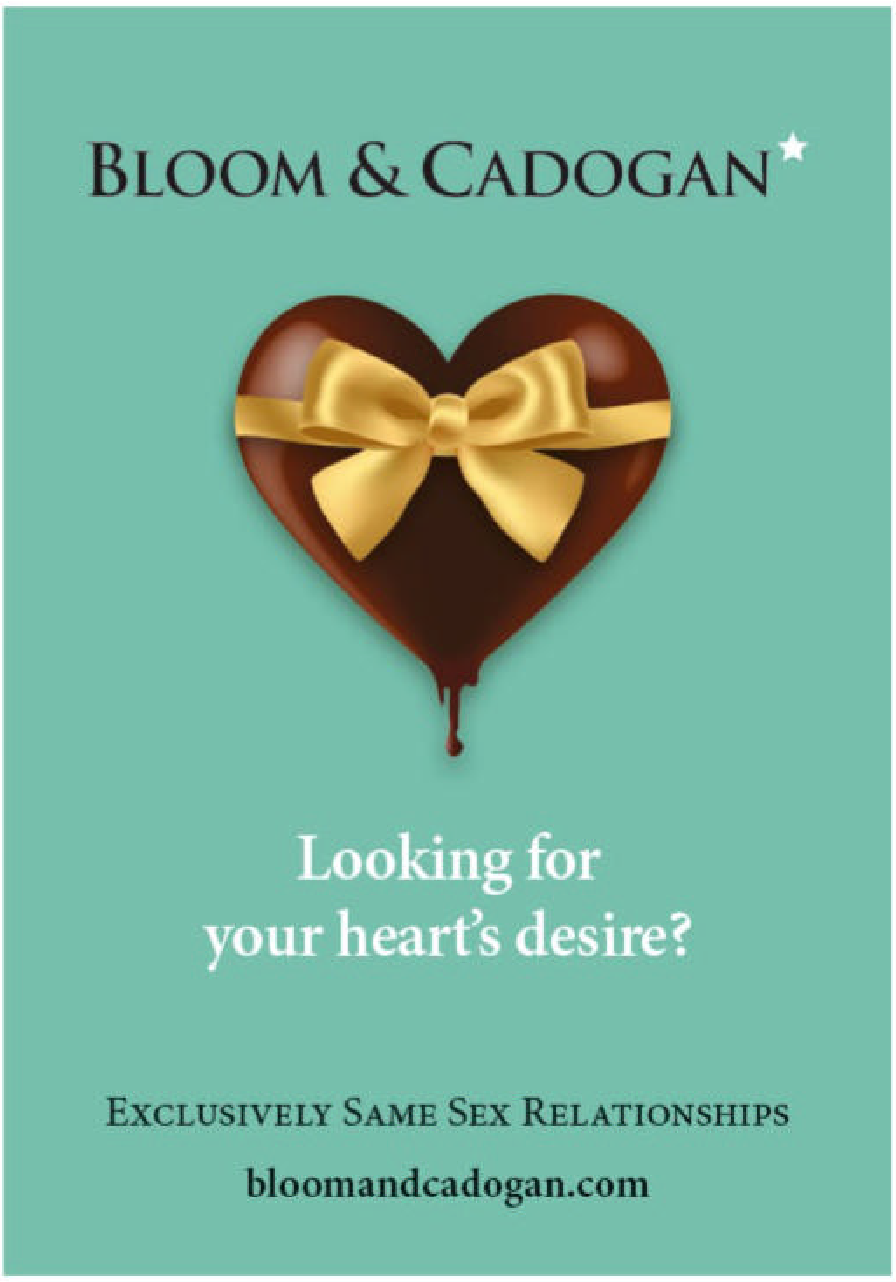

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Life Book memoirs

Why mini financial crises are good for us

Martin Wolf

Financial Times

Recent events are a reminder that "banks are the Achilles heel of the market economy", and "contagion is a permanent danger", says Martin Wolf. The good news is that Britain's "regulatory regime" seems to have been quite effective, but there are still some specific lessons we should take. First, the value of the ring-fencing: the fact that Silicon Valley Bank UK was "a ring-fenced subsidiary, not a branch" made it much easier for the authorities to step in and resolve the situation "quickly and independently". A second lesson is that even the best-laid plans can go awry in a panic – as happened at Credit Suisse. Clearly, the key to avoiding bank runs is ensuring that depositors "feel safe": hence the importance of credible "loss-bearing" mechanisms and "strong liquidity" rules. But the "best protection against occasional huge banking crises is frequent smaller ones": they act as warnings. Pressure for reduced controls has been growing in Britain, yet it was the deregulation of smaller American banks that contributed to this "mini" crisis. The shock "should make mindless deregulation less appealing to politicians, and mindless risk-taking less appealing to bankers".

Let's replace the guvnor with ChatGPT

Izabella Kaminska

Politico

In a recent speech to the London School of Economics, Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey observed that "policy decisions can have unpredictable and complex effects on the economy". Turns out he took the line from ChatGPT, says Izabella Kaminska – a dangerous stunt given the question it gives rise to. Which is this: might an AI robot have made a better job of communicating monetary policy than Bailey himself? When central bankers get the comms right, a single phrase – like "whatever it takes" from former ECB chief Mario Draghi – "can save an entire financial system". When they fail, however, "they risk losing the confidence of a nation". This is now the position in which gaffe-prone Bailey finds himself. Having insisted that inflation was "transitory", he "compounded alarm" by admitting he felt "helpless" in the teeth of it. So, too, his pleading for restraint on price-setting: it showed a complete underappreciation of market psychology. The economist Milton Friedman once suggested computer programs might one day make better central bankers than humans. In the case of the Bank of England's boss, they couldn't do much worse.

Don't write off Cazoo just yet

Alistair Osborne

The Times

"Some share price crashes say more about the market than the company," says Alistair Osborne. Take the UK online car dealer Cazoo. When it floated in New York in August 2021, investors slapped a $7bn valuation on the loss-making startup, hoping it might be a European rival to the $60bn US juggernaut Carvana. Since then, "the wheels have come off both big time". Carvana now is valued at just $1.6bn; Cazoo has lost a shocking 99% of its value. Both have fallen victim to "the Fed cranking up interest rates, the tech rout and a sea-change in investor appetite for gas-guzzling jam-tomorrow stories". But while Cazoo's latest full-year losses of £704m certainly aren't pretty, it has some statistics on its side. Retail sales last year were up 88%, and the company reckons it's on course to boost profit margins in line with those enjoyed by traditional top car dealers. "Cazoo has shown Brits will buy cars online." The risk is that it "runs out of fuel before it proves it can make money. But it may not be "quite the car crash it looks".

The office jerk needs his place in the sun

Bartleby

The Economist

One personality type occupies more attention in the workplace than any other, says Bartleby. The "talented jerk" (aka the "toxic rock star" or "destructive hero") is a staple of management literature. With good reason. "These are people who smash both targets and team cohesion, who get stuff done and get away with behaving badly as a result." Plenty of companies have opted for a zero-tolerance approach to these characters, on the grounds that "toxic behaviour is contagious" and a real danger to company cultures – bad for retention and for reputation, and also "just bad in itself". But perhaps we should curtail our enthusiasm for banning jerks. For a start, the no-jerk rule involves a lot of subjectivity. But the most compelling argument is that these people may not be the real source of danger for companies. "What about the pool of nice underperformers who potter along amiably and harmlessly, helping the culture much more than they do the bottom line?" Talented jerks stand out "like shards of glass among bare feet". At least you can see them. "Mediocrities", by contrast, "are like carbon monoxide, silently poisoning an organisation".

City profiles

Ammar Al Khudairy

"Absolutely not," said Ammar Al Khudairy when asked last month if the Saudi National Bank would inject more capital into Credit Suisse. "Those two words precipitated the demise of one of Switzerland's oldest banks" – and his own career, said The Sunday Telegraph. A fortnight after the panicked run on Credit Suisse, the SNB chair has been ousted, leaving a $1.2bn hole in his bank's balance sheet. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, is reportedly "furious" about the debacle. The kingdom had hoped its investment in Credit Suisse would spur a foray into global banking; instead, it has been left with egg on its face. "We looked at the down side, we believe it is limited," said Al Khudairy of the deal. Famous last words.

Ed Craven

Australia's youngest billionaire has "been on a winning streak" since the start of the pandemic, said the FT. Such is the lure of anonymous digital currency betting, Stake.com, which Ed Craven co-founded in 2017, has grown almost unnoticed "to become the world's seventh largest gambling group", eclipsing established brands such as DraftKings and 888. In 2020, the business turned over just $105m; last year, that had mushroomed to $2.6bn. Craven, 27, cut his teeth in gambling a decade ago when he invited other players of the online fantasy game RuneScape "to bet digital gold coins". Stake.com has since carved a niche as the go-to site for discreet high-rollers. The "subdued" crypto market has played into his hands – day traders who used to speculate now gamble instead.

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MALNUTRITION APPEAL

MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES
DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS

TREATING MALNUTRITION IS ABOUT MORE THAN FOOD. IT'S ABOUT MEDICAL CARE.

An MSF nurse helps a mother feed her four-month-old malnourished child in Madarounfa clinic, Niger. Photograph © Oliver Barth/MSF

DR JENNA BROOME IS A DOCTOR RECENTLY RETURNED FROM ETHIOPIA

“ The malnutrition crisis in Ethiopia is the worst I've ever seen. You walk into our feeding centres and there are malnourished children everywhere. All our beds are full, family members are sleeping on the floors, mattresses line the corridors and, every day, more desperately ill people arrive. We just can't turn anybody away.

People walk for miles to get to us, carrying their children. We see kids brought in who are really sick, almost at the point where they won't survive. But with just a little bit of care and some focused treatment, we see them turn around. We give them antibiotics, oxygen and blood transfusions and, once they are stabilised, start them on therapeutic food and they begin to get better. You see their personalities come back, they start to smile, they come alive again.

It's the best feeling in the world witnessing something like that, watching kids who could barely lift their heads a few weeks earlier running and playing. It's so moving to see parents having their little ones restored to them.

Malnutrition isn't just hunger. These children have an inability to fight off infectious disease because their immune systems have been so compromised that they need a whole range of medical care.

But one thing I've learned working for MSF is that it doesn't take that much to combat malnutrition. With the right treatment and care, kids can really bounce back. You don't need a lot of fancy kit. You need antibiotics, vaccinations, basic medical equipment, therapeutic food, and doctors and nurses who can do the work. You can do an awful lot with very little.

It's completely unacceptable that children are still dying of starvation in 2023 when it's so treatable and preventable. And it's not just in Ethiopia. In Nigeria, in South Sudan, in Somalia, MSF teams are treating men, women and children caught up in this ongoing malnutrition crisis.

If MSF wasn't there, many of these children would die. We need your support to keep reaching and treating people affected by this malnutrition crisis. We can't do it without you.”

MALNUTRITION EMERGENCY

Conflict, poor weather conditions and price rises are driving a deadly spike in malnutrition in many parts of the world. Children under five are most at risk. In Niger, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan, MSF is operating specialised inpatient feeding centres and is providing critical care to paediatric patients with severe medical complications. Treating malnutrition with food is not enough. Young children with severe malnutrition can become extremely vulnerable to conditions they'd otherwise recover from. We need your support to provide the lifesaving medical care these children desperately need.

£41	could pay for a blood pressure monitor to help detect underlying health issues
£447	can provide a month of lifesaving therapeutic food to treat 24 severely malnourished children
£194	could pay for a sustenance kit to help mothers provide babies with essential nutrition

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OR ☐ Please charge my VISA/Mastercard/Amex/CAF card:

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102108

Who's tipping what

The week's best shares

AG Barr
Investors' Chronicle
Cost pressures have hit the Irn-Bru maker's margins. But it was a "solid year" with "chunky" revenue uplift, thanks to a standout performance by Rubicon. Open to more acquisitions. Buy. 526p.

Chesnara
The Times
This cash-generative closed-book life and pension policy insurer is on "solid form". Three recently competed acquisitions should generate £10m annually, and there's £100m for more bolt-on deals. Yields 8.1%. Buy. 281p.

Informa
The Sunday Times
Strong demand, especially in China, has boosted the trade show specialist, which has slashed debt and streamlined. Revenues rose 33% and profits 50%, divis have resumed and its market research arm is growing strongly. Buy. 692.6p.

Merchants Trust
The Daily Telegraph
Merchants invests in FTSE 100 firms, such as Shell and GSK, when they trade at fair prices. It has a "stunning track record of dividend growth" and an "excellent history of capital returns". Yields 4.9%. One for the long term. Buy. 563p.

Softcat
The Times
The software reseller has boosted customer numbers and profit per client is up 17%. Hiring more staff could mean profits are flat this year, but should precede an annual rise of 9% in 2024. A special divi is on the cards. Buy. £12.15.

Ten Entertainment
Investors' Chronicle
Bowling continues to attract punters during the cost-of-living crisis – and this operator has had its "best ever financial year", with food, drink and ancillary spending all up. Utilities are hedged till late 2024. Expanding. Buy. 282p.

...and some to hold, avoid or sell

Abrdn
The Times
The asset manager's bloated cost base and heavy outflows have made the market dive painful. But, while higher margin, it's not immune to damaging market forces. Avoid. 203.1p.

Blancco Technology Group
The Daily Telegraph
Shares in this software deletion specialist have fallen, but revenues have jumped 16% with all regions growing, and margins have nudged up. Prospects remain bright, backed by regulatory change and environmental concerns. Hold. 187p.

Braemar
The Mail on Sunday
Shipping is buoyant and this industry specialist – majoring in essential commodity cargoes including oil and gas, wheat, logs, metal and cement – is "riding the waves". Expanding and gaining share in shipping finance. Hold. 302.5p.

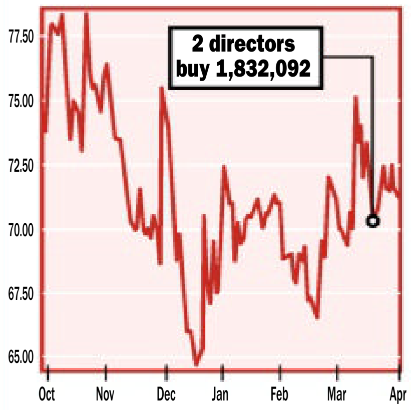
Essentra
The Times
After the 2022 sale of its filters arm, Essentra is a higher-margin components business. But Chinese lockdowns and customer stock rundowns have hit orders. Aiming to triple profits with improved efficiencies. Hold. 187p.

International Distributions Services
The Times
The beleaguered postal firm remains in costly dispute with its workers. Losses are set to worsen, and its profitable parcels arm, GLS, operates in a fiercely competitive market. Avoid. 225.7p.

S&U
The Mail on Sunday
S&U provides loans for non-prime used-car buyers. Thanks to a reputation for fairness, demand is strong. It also has a growing bridging loan business, Aspen, for property buyers. Yields +5%. Hold. £23.60.

Directors' dealings

Litigation Capital Management



Shares in the legal finance firm are down by a third. Yet chair Jonathan Moulds has bought £1.2m of shares and now owns 4.4% of issued share capital. CEO Patrick Moloney bought shares worth £112,000, taking his stake to 8.76%.

SOURCE: INVESTORS' CHRONICLE

Form guide

Shares tipped 12 weeks ago

Best tip
Caledonia Mining
The Mail on Sunday
up 12.62% to £12.05

Worst tip
Fresnillo
The Daily Telegraph
down 17.08% to 747.6p

Market view

"The bond market seems to be saying the US economy will fall into recession, or the banking stresses are far from resolved and will require more explicit Fed action to deal with them...We think stocks are next."
Mike Wilson of Morgan Stanley. Quoted in the FT

Market summary

Key numbers for investors

	3 April 2023	Week before	Change (%)
FTSE 100	7673.00	7484.25	2.52%
FTSE All-share UK	4175.71	4072.46	2.54%
Dow Jones	33501.09	32515.98	3.03%
NASDAQ	12118.30	11705.60	3.53%
Nikkei 225	28188.15	27518.25	2.43%
Hang Seng	20409.18	19784.65	3.16%
Gold	1979.70	1946.25	1.72%
Brent Crude Oil	84.67	79.10	7.04%
DIVIDEND YIELD (FTSE 100)	3.63%	3.73%	
UK 10-year gilts yield	3.56	3.61	
US 10-year Treasuries	3.42	3.56	
UK ECONOMIC DATA			
Latest CPI (yoy)	10.4% (Feb)	10.1% (Jan)	
Latest RPI (yoy)	13.8% (Feb)	13.4% (Jan)	
Halifax house price (yoy)	2.10%(Feb)	1.9% (Jan)	

£1 STERLING: $1.243 €1.139 ¥164.989 Bitcoin $28,048.60

Best and worst performing shares

WEEK'S CHANGE, FTSE 100 STOCKS

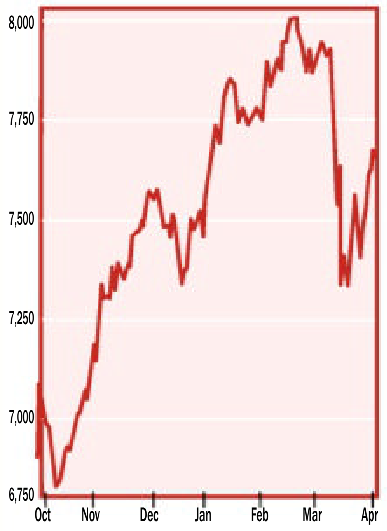
RISES	**Price**	**% change**
Ocado Group	524.00	+15.90
Land Securities Group	630.80	+9.55
Endeavour Mining (Lon)	2022.00	+8.77
DCC	4721.00	+8.70
Prudential	1113.50	+8.48
FALLS		
Next	6452.00	-3.41
Aviva	404.60	-1.96
Smith & Nephew	1126.50	-1.18
Haleon	322.65	-1.10
Associated Brit. Foods	1934.50	-0.87

FTSE 250 RISER & FALLER

Tullow Oil	33.44	+17.00
TUI AG	611.40	-55.80

Source: FT/Refinitiv (not adjusted for dividends). Prices on 3 April (pm)

Following the Footsie



6-month movement in the FTSE 100 index

Children of the SS: the Nazi plan to increase the master race

When the Nazis came to power, they established maternity homes to encourage women of "good blood" to populate the world with Aryans. Decades on, some of those born in the homes are still struggling to face up to their origins, writes Valentine Faure

Gisèle (left) and Walter (second from right) being cared for at the Kloster Indersdorf

© HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM COLLECTION, GIFT OF LILO PLASCHKES

At the small primary school in Jouy-sous-les-Côtes, in northeastern France, Gisèle Marc knew the rumour about her: that her parents were not her real parents, and her real mother must have been a whore. It was the late 1940s, just after the War, a time when whispered stories like this one passed from parents to children. Women who were said to have slept with occupying soldiers – "horizontal collaborators" – had their heads shaved and were publicly shamed by angry crowds. In the playground, children jeered at those who were said to be born of "unknown fathers".

The idea that Gisèle might have been abandoned by someone of ill repute made her terribly ashamed. At the age of ten, she gathered her courage and confronted her mother, who told her the truth: we adopted you when you were four years old; you spoke German, but now you are French. Gisèle and her mother hardly ever talked about it again. Gisèle found her adoption file in a drawer in her parents' room, and from time to time she snuck a look at it. It contained little information. When she was 18, she burned it. "I said to myself, if I want to live, I have to get rid of all this," she told me.

> *"All SS leaders were expected to reproduce, with four children considered the minimum amount for a sound marriage"*

Gisèle is 79 now, and she does not regret burning the papers. For a time, she was able to put aside questions about her origins. At 17, she took a job in a children's home and hospital, and realised she had found her calling. She spent her career working mainly in daycare centres, and eventually founded her own. In 1972, she married Justin Niango, a chemistry student from the Ivory Coast. They bought an old hotel in Nancy and turned it into a house. I visited Gisèle there in June. It was easy to imagine the vibrant family life that once took place inside: her children – Virginie, Gabriel, Grégoire, and Matthieu – running up and down the stairs and playing instruments in their rooms. At school, they were sometimes the only black kids in their class. Gisèle has a lot of stories about the cruel comments made through the years; all the stories end with her confronting the culprit.

Gisèle held off on telling her children that she had been adopted, because she was worried that the revelation might weaken their bonds with her parents. Sometimes, though, the secret "burned a bit". When her mother died, in 2004, she gathered her children and told them. They were shocked, and asked questions whose answers she did not know. After years of denial, Gisèle longed to find those answers. She remembered the name and place of birth that had been listed in her burned adoption file: Gisela Magula, born in Bar-le-Duc, in northeastern France. She started her research there, and went on to write to the Arolsen Archives, the international centre on Nazi persecution, in Germany, to ask if there was any mention of her in the organisation's records. In March 2005, Gisèle received a reply: she had not been born in Bar-le-Duc, but near Liège, Belgium, in a Nazi maternity home at the Château de Wégimont. That home and others like it had been set up by the SS under the umbrella of the "Lebensborn" ("Fountain of Life") association, through which the regime sought to encourage the birth of babies of "good blood" in order to hasten its ultimate goal of Aryan racial purity. The family she'd spent her adult life defending against racism, she realised, descended from one of history's darkest racial projects.

Nazism was an ideology of destruction, one that held as its primary aim the elimination of "inferior races". But another, equally fervent aspect of the Nazi credo was focused on an imagined form of restoration: as soon as they came to power, the Nazis set out to produce a new generation of pure-blooded Germans. The Lebensborn association was a key part of this plan. Established in 1935 under the auspices of the SS, it was intended to encourage procreation among members of the Aryan race by providing birthing mothers with comfort, financial support and, when necessary, secrecy. The association's headquarters were in Munich, in the former villa of the writer Thomas Mann, who had left Germany in 1933. In 1936, it opened its first maternity home, in nearby Steinhöring.

The SS was overseen by Heinrich Himmler, who hoped that its elite soldiers would serve as a racial vanguard for a revitalised Germanity. "As far as the value of our blood and the numbers of our population are concerned, we are dying out," he said in a 1931 address. "We are called upon to establish foundations so that the next generation can make history." An agronomist by training, Himmler supervised this undertaking with a level of attention that bordered on voyeurism; initially, all SS leaders' marriage applications had to be referred to him. All were expected to reproduce: four children was considered "the minimum amount... for a good sound marriage". In 1939, he issued an order that called on members of the SS to procreate wherever they could, including with women to whom they were not married.

According to Himmler, the Lebensborn homes were intended "primarily for the brides and wives of our young SS men, and secondarily for illegitimate mothers of good blood". But the latter were, in practice, a majority. Far from the eyes of the world, single mothers could give birth in Lebensborn homes and, if they wanted to, abandon their babies, who would receive the best care before being placed in an adoptive family – so long as the biological parents met the racial criteria (photos of both were required). Early applicants had to meet a height requirement, and had to prove their racial and medical fitness going back two generations. Lebensborn employees required mothers to breastfeed their children if they could. "The woman has her own battlefield," Adolf Hitler said in 1935. "With every child she brings into the world, she fights her battle for the nation."

Gisèle: sought answers after years of denial

© NOLWENN BROD FOR THE ATLANTIC

The women also received a daily "ideological education", according to the historian Lisa Pine. Some of the babies were given a non-Christian first name by Lebensborn staff in a ceremony inspired by old Nordic customs. Under a Nazi flag and a portrait of the führer, in front of a congregation, the master of ceremonies would hold an SS dagger over the newborn and recite this creed: "We take you into our community as a limb of our body. You shall grow up in our protection and bring honour to your name, pride to your brotherhood, and inextinguishable glory to your race." Through this ceremony, they believed, the child became a member of the SS clan, forever linked to the Reich.

> *"Under a Nazi flag and portrait of the führer, a master of ceremonies would hold an SS dagger over the newborn"*

By 11 October 1943, when Gisèle was born, there were about 16 Lebensborn facilities throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. She arrived four days too late to have Himmler as her godfather; the reichsführer personally sponsored the children who shared his birthday, 7 October.

One afternoon last spring, I sat with Gisèle in her living room, dozens of documents and photographs spread out before us. A short woman whose white hair is shot through with a streak of brown, Gisèle is at once reserved and straightforward, with a wry sense of humour. "Himmler really bungled with me," she joked, referencing her marriage to an African man and their mixed-race family. Gisèle rejects the idea that there's a connection between her career and her early years spent in a very different kind of daycare centre – she chose her path, after all, long before she knew where she had really come from. Still, she doesn't minimise the fact that her life story is inextricable from the history of Nazism. She has often wondered how her origins might shape what she calls her "internal memory": she has always been afraid of military trucks, trains and leather boots. She cannot bear to hear babies crying; at her daycare job, she would often leave her office to comfort the little ones. She worries, too, that she somehow passed something evil on to her children through her genes.

The story that Gisèle has managed to piece together about her origins is still full of holes, but she now knows the identity of her biological mother. Marguerite Magula was a Hungarian woman who immigrated to Brussels with her parents and sister in 1926. Marguerite eventually went to Germany to work in a garment factory. When she got pregnant, in 1943, she ran away and returned to Brussels.

Dorothee Schmitz-Köster, the author of *Lifelong Lebensborn: The Desired Children of the SS and What Became of Them*, told me that, by then, the Lebensborn programme had somewhat loosened its criteria: a fervent belief in National Socialism could make up for being short, as Marguerite was, though an Aryan certificate, a health certificate, and a certificate of hereditary health were still mandatory for both parents.

Gisèle's feelings toward Marguerite have changed over time. When she learnt from the archives that some mothers had searched for their children after the War, trying to get them back, Gisèle came to hate her. "She never sought me out," Gisèle said. "I have no compassion, nothing; quite the opposite. That's not a mother." A postwar document denying Marguerite's request for Hungarian citizenship (she and her sister were then stateless) mentions her "bad life". Had Gisèle and Marguerite met, maybe she could have explained. But Marguerite died in 2001, just a few years before Gisèle began her search. Gisèle has been less curious about the identity of her father; she imagines him as the stereotype of an SS officer – undoubtedly "a bastard". In 2009, she met a half-brother, Claude, born after the War, who was raised by Marguerite. They still visit each other from time to time. Claude, she said, describes their mother as having mistreated him. He once told Gisèle she was lucky not to have grown up with their mother.

Like Gisèle, Walter Beausert owed the discovery of his origins to chance. At the birth of his first daughter, Valérie, in 1966, the midwife stared at Beausert, then 22 years old. Behind his helmet of straight blond hair, she noticed his light-blue eyes – one of them was a glass eye that never closed – and remembered the 17 small children who had arrived by train at the hospital in Commercy in 1946. "I think you come from Germany," she said to him. It confirmed something Walter had always suspected. Walter was the only child in that convoy to France never to have been adopted. He grew up in children's homes and became a guarded, tough teenager. "My father was obsessed with the search for his family. He looked for his mother all his life," Walter's daughter Valérie, now 56, told me when we met at an old art-nouveau brasserie in Nancy.

In 1994, while filming a TV report about the Lebensborn, Walter travelled to the site of the former home at the Château de Wégimont, where he heard from locals about a woman named Rita, a Lebensborn cook, who had had a baby boy named Walter. As German soldiers tried to take Walter away from Rita, the story went, he was dropped and his left eye was injured. This was the lead the grown-up Walter had been waiting for – Rita, he came to believe, was his mother. "Except that's not true," Valérie said. "We met this Rita; we know who this Walter is. He's not my father. But he didn't want to hear anything about it. He said Rita had a second child who was also named Walter. I told him, 'This doesn't make any sense.' His denial was pathological."

Valérie, who has the same eyes and hair as her father, was called a "*sale Boche*" – "dirty Kraut" – at school during her childhood, just as her father had been called a "white rat". In 1986, Valérie fell in love with a man who was a refugee from Vietnam. "My son's father was the first person of colour in our village," she said. "But for me it was a non-issue. I felt like an outsider myself." Their son, Lâm, was born with one brown eye and one blue eye. One eye – the blue one – presented with a deficiency. The doctor identified a congenital abnormality that could cause blindness, which Valérie also carried and had passed on to him. Her father's glass eye, she realised, was not the result of an injury at all. "When my son had to undergo an operation, I told my father, 'You see, it is congenital.'" Her father was outraged, Valérie recalled: "Nonsense! You can't say that!"

The Lebensborn children at play

© ROBERT CAPA/INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF PHOTOGRAPHY/MAGNUM

It wasn't just that Walter wanted to believe that his glass eye was the result of his biological mother's struggle to protect him from German soldiers; he was also terrified of disease, of being "a carrier of defects", Valérie said, and went to great lengths to prove his superior strength and stoicism. One day, while he was chopping wood, his friend's chainsaw ripped through a trunk, cutting both of Walter's calves to the bone. Walter made himself two tourniquets and drove home. Valérie remembers him walking up the stairs as if nothing had happened, both legs bloody, and calmly asking her to call an ambulance.

Walter found others' fragility unbearable. When his wife, Valérie's mother, was diagnosed with cancer, Valérie sometimes kept him out of her room. "He would tell her, 'You have to fight; you must eat; that's how you get better.' It was a form of psychological abuse." To Valérie, this trait in her father was a troubling echo of the Nazi emphasis on physical superiority. "A young German must be as swift as a greyhound, as tough as leather, and as hard as Krupp steel," Hitler proclaimed in 1935. Lebensborn children born with conditions such as Down's syndrome, cleft lip, or clubfoot were thrown out of the homes, or killed. Sometimes Valérie worries about what she, and her son, might have inherited from her father. "When I see some of my son's character traits – a little tough, a little authoritarian – which could belong to my father but also to me, I always have this fleeting anxiety: did we pass along something of the Lebensborn?"

> *"In the nine years the programme lasted, at least 9,200 children were born in the homes"*

For Gisèle and her fellow Lebensborn children, the Allies' liberation of Belgium marked the beginning of a journey – in wicker cradles wedged in the back of military trucks – through a devastated Europe. In *The Factory of Perfect Children*, the French journalist Boris Thiolay recounts that German soldiers in retreat left the Lebensborn home near Liège on 1 September 1944, with about 20 toddlers. After several stops in Germany and Poland, the children found themselves at the very first Lebensborn, in Steinhöring. Walter Beausert had ended up there too. In Steinhöring, SS officials were crammed together with children and pregnant women from other institutions that were now closed. Boxes of documents cluttered the corridors of the ward, where women continued to give birth.

When the news of Hitler's death broke, officials burned as many documents as they could. But the Nazis' obsession with documents made fully expunging the records an impossible task – there were too many. A few days after Hitler's death, a small detachment of US soldiers arrived in Steinhöring, and the children changed hands: the Americans were responsible for them now. Later in 1945, Gisèle and Walter were transferred to Kloster Indersdorf, nine miles from Dachau, where they were housed in a 12th century monastery, which had been requisitioned by the US army for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) to use as a reception centre for displaced children. There, the Lebensborn children lived together with survivors: Jewish children who had made it out of the concentration camps, as well as Eastern and Central European gentile teenagers who had been forced labourers during the War.

The older children were encouraged to help the younger ones. A picture shows three small blonde girls gently combing babies' hair and spoon-feeding them as if they were playing with dolls. Another photo shows a group of babies on a check blanket under the watch of the American social worker Lillian Robbins and a Sister of Mercy. In the corner, sitting on the floor away from the other toddlers, is little Walter, one eye closed, smiling at the photographer. The UNRRA staff tried to find the children's surviving family members, if there were any, though some children had no recorded identity. Some were given an approximate birth date. This was perhaps what happened with Walter Beausert, whose official date of birth falls on a suspicious, though of course possible, date: 1 January 1944. As for young Gisela, her file showed that she was born in "Wégimont" (omitting the château's full name), which staff believed to be a French town. She joined Walter in the convoy bound for the Meuse region of France, whose population had never recovered from the First World War. Gisèle's life as a French child began.

On 10 October 1947, in Nuremberg, four Lebensborn leaders appeared before a special American military tribunal as part of the Subsequent Nuremberg Trials, which prosecuted ancillary Nazi leaders. Three charges were brought against them: crimes against humanity, war crimes, and membership in a criminal organisation. Three out of the four leaders were found guilty of the third charge. But the tribunal established that the Lebensborn had been only a "welfare institution". The children, therefore, were not considered victims.

In the nine years the programme lasted, at least 9,200 children were born in the homes. Some 1,200 were born in Norway, which had the most SS maternity homes outside Germany. After the War, these children, along with women who were suspected of having had affairs with German soldiers, were ostracised. Some of these women were even interned in camps. France had only one Lebensborn home, which operated for less than a year, so children there were far less likely to be recognised as such.

In 2011, Gisèle and Walter travelled to Indersdorf to join the annual commemoration held there by former residents of UNRRA's reception centre; Gisèle described the organisers as "Jewish children", just as she still refers to herself as a "child of the Lebensborn". "It was extraordinary" to be included in the ceremony, she told me. While she was in Indersdorf, she went to visit Dachau twice. She felt she needed to confront what she might have believed in had she been raised in an SS family. Together, Gisèle and Walter started the Association for the Memory of Child Victims of the Lebensborn in 2016, an effort to encourage public recognition of Lebensborn children as victims of war. Walter, for his part, became obsessed with gaining acceptance from the Jewish community. He studied the Torah and identified as a Zionist. "He used to celebrate Jewish holidays," Valérie remembers. "His Jewish friends were a great help to my father. To tell him, 'You are also a victim, Walter' was the greatest gift." He died in 2021, wearing a Star of David around his neck. He had been in poor health, and living in a retirement home. A few days earlier, for the first time in his life, he had admitted that maybe Rita was not his mother.

Valérie has kept a comb that still contains her father's hair. One day, she hopes to find out what secrets his DNA might contain. Gisèle's husband, Justin, died 15 years ago, but she still spends nearly every winter in Africa, in his village, where she is "famous", she said, in part because residents saw her on TV, in a segment about the Lebensborn. At home in Nancy, she keeps a photograph of her biological mother on display, though she doesn't look at it much anymore. "It's my heritage. I don't want to forget that I was born from this woman," she told me.

A longer version of this article appeared in The Atlantic.
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THE WEEK CROSSWORD 1357

An Ettinger pass holder and two Connell Guides will be given to the sender of the first correct solution to the crossword and the clue of the week opened on Monday 17 April. Send it to The Week Crossword 1357, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR, or email the completed grid/listed solutions to crossword@theweek.co.uk. **Tim Moorey (timmoorey.com)**

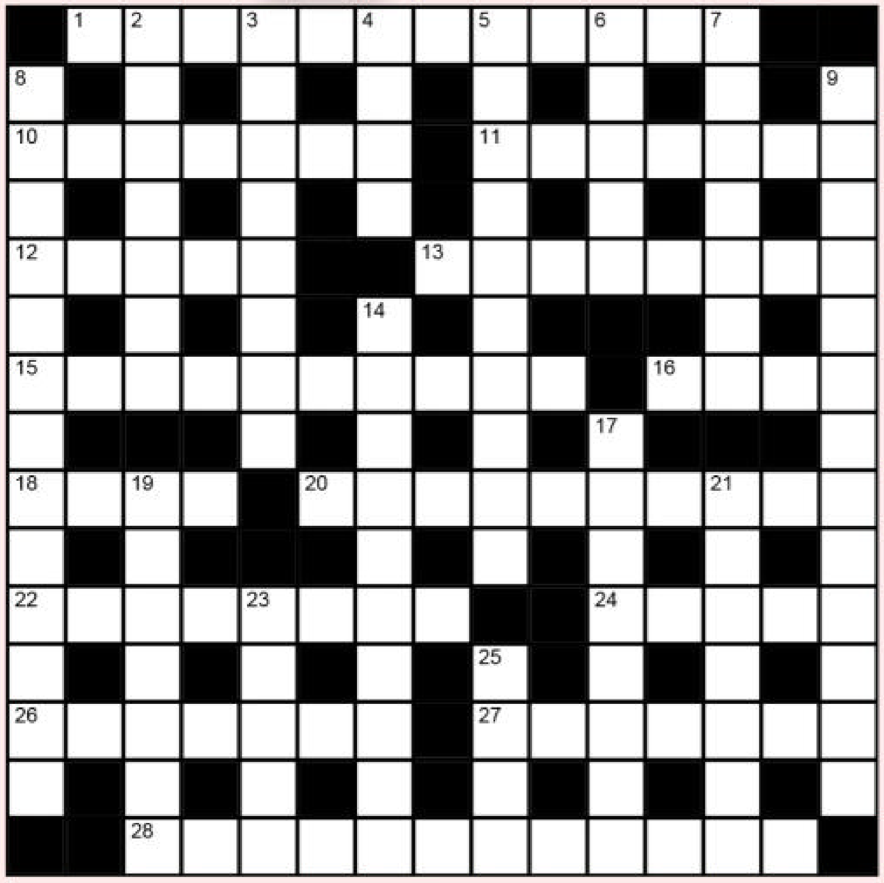
This week's winner will receive an Ettinger (ettinger.co.uk) travel pass holder in assorted colours, which retails at £115, and two Connell Guides (connellguides.com).

ACROSS

1 Ancient Peruvian line makes you livid (12)
10 Lager is out in one part of Africa (7)
11 Broadcast reduction in special delivery (3-4)
12 As before, not all understand IT totally (5)
13 Indo-roast cooking with no end of spices? (8)
15 "Male door" is wrong for this (6,4)
16 Backing for guns in US party (4)
18 Cool and fine? On the contrary (4)
20 Shy cop ordered course for deranged, scary person (10)
22 Some call one lie reasonable – that's rather sad (8)
24 Swiss currency managed in Chelsea, for example (5)
26 Hungarian spending limits affected South American currency (7)
27 John's Reliant crashed (7)
28 Aim in studies could be further entries (12)

DOWN

2 Cancelled? Want to take ticket back (7)
3 Excellent colours for solvents (8)
4 Rush to get part of car upfront (4)
5 Get out of boxing amateur? That hurt a boastful coward (10)
6 Some joy-rider revved up and slipped (5)
7 Move round unfashionable crowd (7)
8 With father opening, cricket fielders fly (5,8)
9 Help coward escape as a youngster (6,7)
14 Music prone to be changed for part of theatre (10)
17 Scraps in a shower after match (8)
19 Female's not just come here for amusement (7)
21 Canada I fancy for this early settler (7)
23 Capital has to be invested in city (5)
25 Complaints in abundance when hospital not available (4)



Name ....
Address ....
.... Tel no ....
Clue of the week answer: ....

Clue of the week: Met expectations? (7, 8 first letter W) *The Times*

Solution to Crossword 1355

ACROSS: 1 Shears **4** Amidship **9** Daring **10** Unerring **11** Catamounts **13** Épée **15** Ruffs **17** Testament **18** Cooperate **19** Sleet **21** Arch **22** Back number **25** Headship **26** Strata **27** Minstrel **28** Pronto

DOWN: 1 Sidecar **2** Egret **3** Ringmaster **5** Minute steak **6** Dirk **7** Hairpiece **8** Pigment **12** Ultramarine **14** Bass guitar **16** Food chain **18** Chatham **20** Tornado **23** Brain **24** Psst

Clue of the week: Like half-sized member? (4)
Solution: LIMP (LI[KE] + MP)

The winner of 1355 is Kate Howell from Storrington

The Week is available from **RNIB Newsagent** for the benefit of blind and partially sighted readers. 0303-123 9999, rnib.org.uk/newsagent

Sudoku 899 (easy)

		9				5		
			3	8	4			
4		6				7		8
	9			1			4	
	3		9		7		8	
	6			2			1	
1		7				4		3
			7	5	1			
		8				9		

Fill in all the squares so that each row, column and each of the 3x3 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9

Solution to Sudoku 898

3	9	5	6	7	2	4	8	1
7	1	8	5	9	4	3	6	2
6	2	4	3	8	1	7	9	5
9	7	3	4	6	5	1	2	8
4	5	1	8	2	9	6	3	7
2	8	6	7	1	3	9	5	4
5	4	9	1	3	8	2	7	6
8	6	2	9	4	7	5	1	3
1	3	7	2	5	6	8	4	9

brainedUP.com

Charity of the week

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